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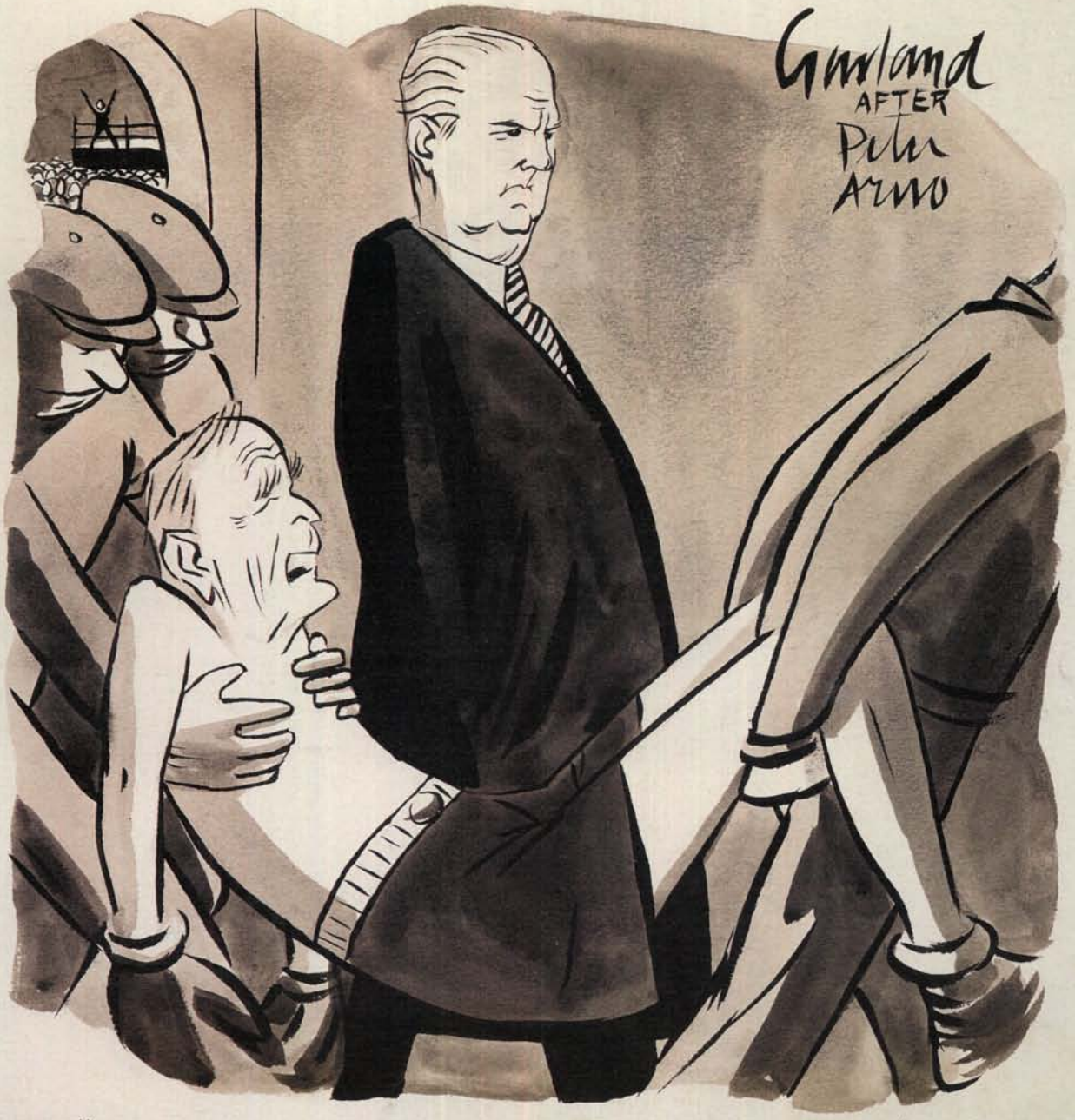

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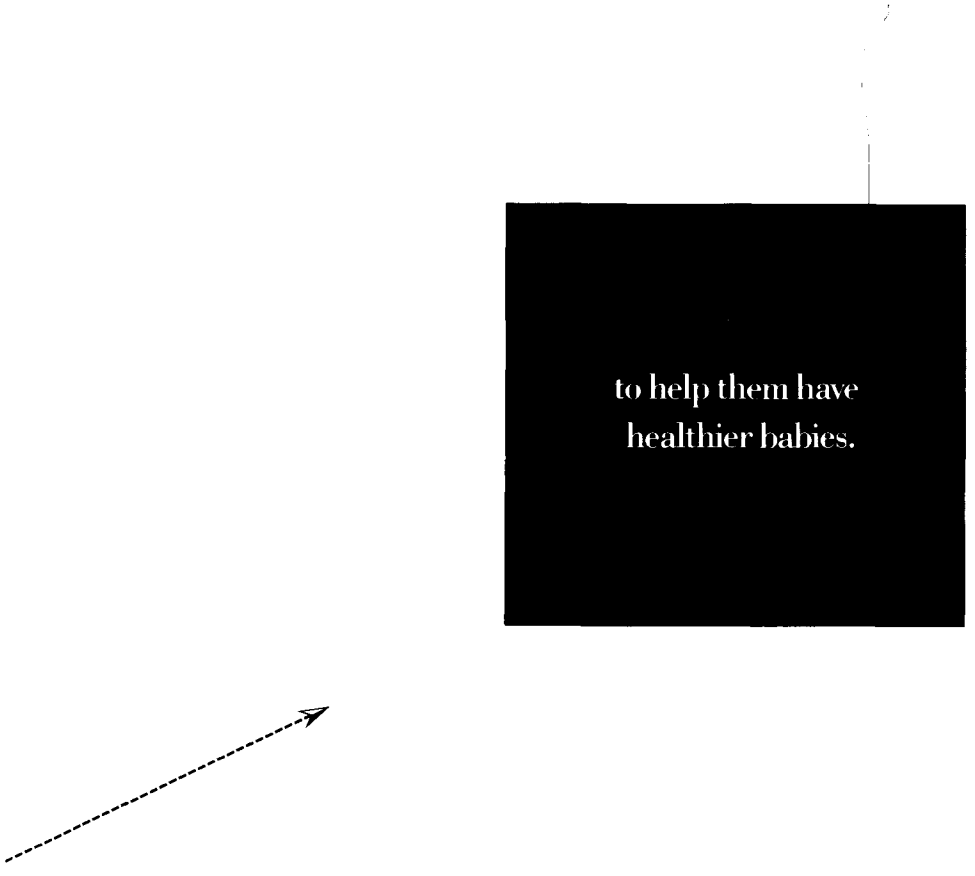

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NATIONAL REVIEW

NOVEMBER 30, 1992 VOL. XLIV, NO. 23

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The Audit Bureau

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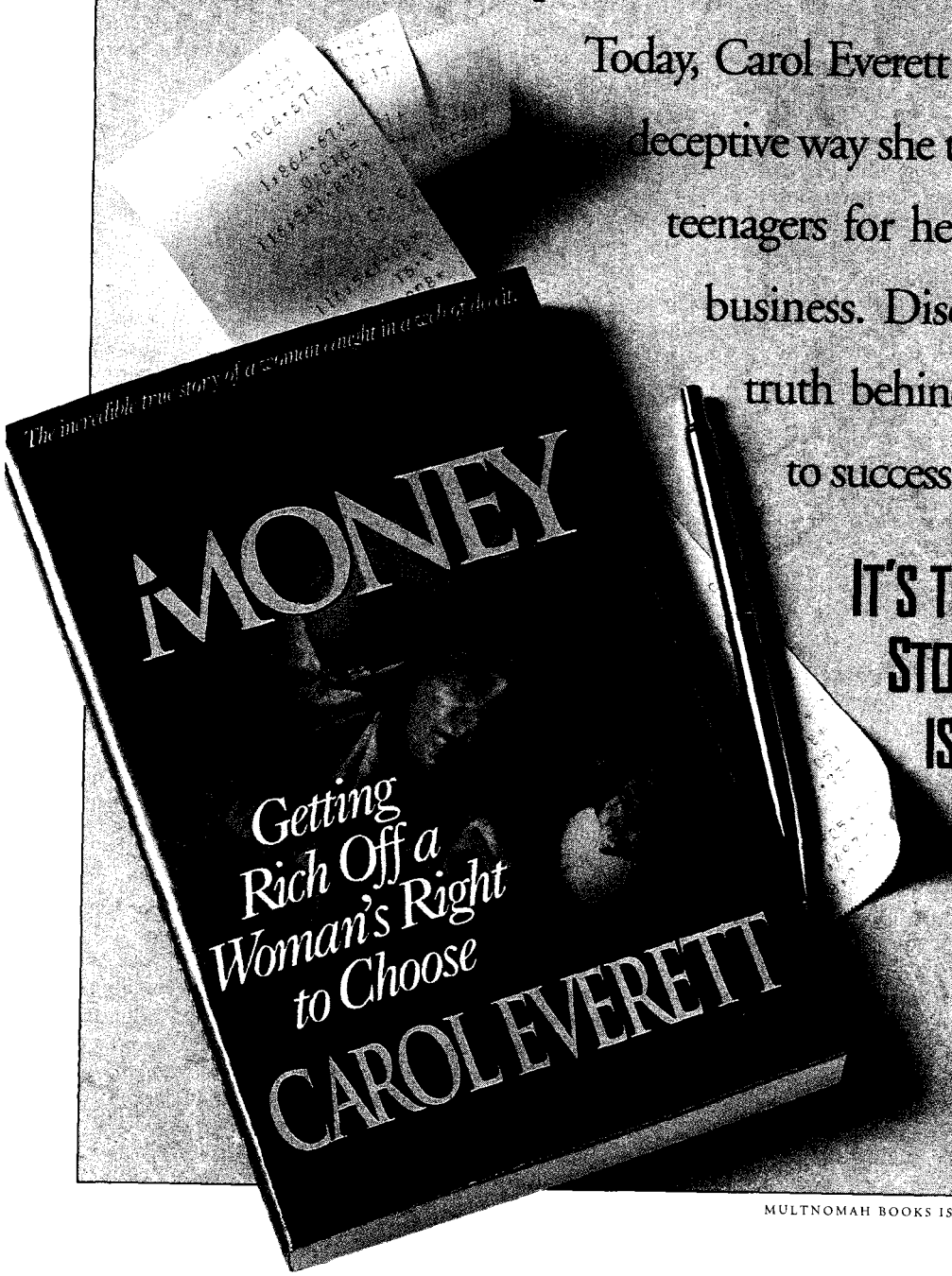

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LETTERS

Assessing the Debt

Paul Craig Roberts reports ["Debt, Lies, and Inflation," Aug. 31] that U.S. Government debt was 36 per cent of GDP in 1991. According to the November 1991 Survey of Current Business (U.S. Department of Commerce), the U.S. Government gross debt outstanding was $3.598 trillion, or 72.5 per cent of the GDP of $4.861 trillion. This percentage far exceeds that of every country listed by Roberts except Italy.

Jack Driker
West Bloomfield, Mich.

The OECD table labeled "Government Debt as a Percentage of GDP" in my article is a measure of the net public debt. Moreover, it measures general government debt, which includes federal, state, and local.

The OECD's figure for U.S. gross general government debt as a percentage of GDP is 58.4 for 1991, which places us in the middle of the G-7 countries. Italy, Canada, and Japan have higher ratios, and Germany, France, and the UK have lower ones. The net figure, or debt held by the public, is the one more commonly used. The gross measure includes trust funds and money that the government owes to itself.

The assertions of the inhibiting effect of a large accumulated public debt overlook the fact that the U.S. public debt at the end of World War II, which was financed by borrowing, stood at approximately 127 per cent of GNP, much larger than at present. This large ratio did not prevent the postwar expansion. —PCR

Turn Coats

Your recent reference to Senator Dan Coats as a "staunch conservative" ["For the Record," Oct. 19] damaged your credibility among thinking conservatives in Indiana. While Senator Coats was the clear choice for conservatives in his reelection effort, he can hardly be compared to the likes of Alan Keyes, who is referred to on the same page as a "solid conservative."

If you would like to take issue with me, please explain how a "staunch conservative" could support plant-closing legislation, mandated parental leave, restrictions on interstate commerce, and the Democratic Party position on the cable-television bill.

Mike Pence
President
Indiana Policy Review
Indianapolis, Ind.

Commercial Behavior

Stanley Rothman need not have relied on conjecture to support the proposition that the media's presentation of assorted violations of traditional standards have an impact on society ["Is Dan Quayle Right?" Oct. 5]. The media themselves provide concrete, non-conjectural evidence in the vast amount of money that they demand and receive from advertisers on their own promise that the exposure will influence their audience's behavior.

They claim to be so effective in influencing public behavior that they are justified in charging huge sums of money for a few seconds of air time or space in major publications. Yet, at the same time, their spokesmen insist that their influence on public behavior is so minimal that many hours of the approving or at least non-judgmental display of hitherto unacceptable behavior have no influence at all.

Rosanne Klass
New York, N.Y.

Tailhooked

David Horowitz grossly misrepresented my views on the Navy's Tailhook episode ["The Feminist Assault on the Military," Oct. 5].

The author incorrectly asserts that I have "demanded that every officer merely *present* at Tailhook be thrown out of the service." Nothing could be further from the truth. I have a great deal of respect for the naval-aviation community, but I cannot condone the behavior of a few misguided individuals. I have stated that only those individuals involved in the harassment episodes do not belong in the service.

Mr. Horowitz also shows a complete lack of knowledge about my background with his implications that I am part of a radical feminist group on the House Armed Services Committee, and that I previously have shown little interest in maintaining an effective defense.

Beverly B. Byron
Member of Congress
Washington, D.C.

*My files were moved after I wrote my article, and as a result I cannot check the quote in question. Accordingly, I accept Representative Byron's correction about which heads she wanted to roll after Tailhook. I also realize (and was aware in writing the article) that she considers herself a moderate. That just shows how wide and deep the leftist victory in the culture war has been. Representative Byron has declared that the Tailhook issue would not be settled until the individuals involved in the incident are identified and prosecuted, and that if this means they have to be ferreted out with lie-detector tests, so be it (Federal News Service, Sept. 14). She has endorsed the draconian punishments meted out to officers at Miramar for the crime of failing to vet a skit (a skit!) that might have been offensive to Pat Schroeder. Her announced goal is the changing of the military's "male-dominated culture" in five years (*USA Today, *Sept. 15).*

In her letter, Beverly Byron claims to be interested in maintaining an effective defense. In her real life, as a ranking member of the Armed Services Committee, she has called on the Secretary of Defense to put women in combat roles "immediately"—in advance of *the $4-million report of the Presidential Commission to determine whether such a change in policy would be militarily warranted (Federal News Service, ibid.). If this be moderation, what pray tell is extremism?* —DH

Feelings? What Feelings?

I keep several recent issues of NATIONAL REVIEW in my law office, and this morning I re-read Florence King's "Huggee" [Oct. 5]. It struck a chord concerning encounters that I and several of my conservative friends have had with other members of our society. My friends and I are continually being accused of "repressing" our "feelings."

Personally, my strong emotions tend to be reserved for special occasions such as when I watched Ronald Reagan's speech at Normandy Beach, when my father had his heart attack, and when the dog died at the end of *Old Yeller*. I am concerned that our society is moving toward a time when if a person doesn't sob and blubber on a daily basis, he will be suspected of hiding his true feelings.

Grant S. Johnston
Crystal City, Mo.

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FROM THE EDITOR

ITYS, Number 453

■ President Bush's graciousness in accepting full responsibility for the Republican defeat should not obscure the fact that he was telling the truth. He inherited an impregnable fortress from Mr. Reagan and set assiduously about undermining the ramparts. All that Mr. Clinton did was lean on it.

But in his task of demolition, Mr. Bush was very ably assisted. We identify some of the villains in this special issue (modeled, I will concede, on the special "Recriminations" issue that *The New Republic* has been publishing every four years since forever).

Mr. Baker is more culpable than anyone else for the Republican campaign: there wasn't one. So I was amused to watch him dissociating himself from something that didn't exist. We wish him a pleasant retirement and, in lieu of the usual gold watch, a framed copy of this cover.

Insofar as the war was lost before the campaign, the chief credit goes to Richard Darman, who not only contrived the greatest blunder of the Bush years, namely the budget summit, but also managed to keep it the centerpiece of the Administration's domestic policy. As we wrote in March: "Richard Darman's . . . presence prevents Mr. Bush from conceding that the 1990 budget summit was a colossal blunder. And Mr. Bush's reluctance to admit a mistake on this central issue . . . undermines his credibility on every other issue."

We hope you enjoy this magazine, and we shall return to these topics as the need arises. In the meantime, our qualified endorsement of Pat Buchanan in New Hampshire doesn't look so bad today, does it?

■ Yesterday I had a letter blaming me for Mr. Bush's defeat. We had, of course, endorsed the President in our pre-election issue, and given him aid and comfort in several issues before that. But the writer's complaint was that Mr. Bush had already been irreparably weakened before the common enemy because NATIONAL REVIEW had criticized him sharply in the last year.

Well, the responsibility for failure rests on those who persist in foolish decisions, not on those who point out their foolishness.

Joe Sobran, when similarly taxed, replies that if his influence is so great as to defeat Mr. Bush, how come the candidate he endorsed got only ten thousand votes nationwide? But I don't think I'll offer that defense.

■ Still, I was sorry to be right. My worst moment came with the news that California's Bruce Herschensohn, a potential conservative leader nationally, had been dragged down to defeat by the national ticket (and by a scurrilous smear from the Democrats).

Bruce has since said that he will not run in 1994 against Dianne Feinstein. Others deserve their turn.

This modesty is all very well, but national conservative leaders are too thin on the ground for us to be persuaded by it. The voice of the people must force him back into politics. His address is: Herschensohn for Senator, 1600 Dove Street, Suite 225, Newport Beach, California 92660.

■ Bill McGurn contributes his last dispatch as *NR*'s Washington bureau chief in this issue—a melancholy retrospective on how the Bush Administration sealed its fate by degrees.

Bill has been appointed a senior editor at the *Far Eastern Economic Review* in Hong Kong, where he is already famous. His *Perfidious Albion* eloquently attacks Britain's failure to defend the Hong Kong Chinese against the encroachments of Peking (though he is favorably impressed by Chris Patten, the new governor).

Bill was an outstanding Washington reporter and a very amiable colleague. We congratulate him on his new appointment, and hope to extort occasional reports from him on the economic suns rising in the East.

—JOHN O'SULLIVAN

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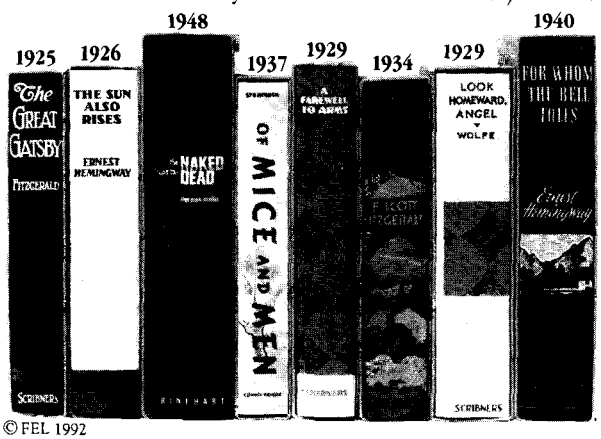

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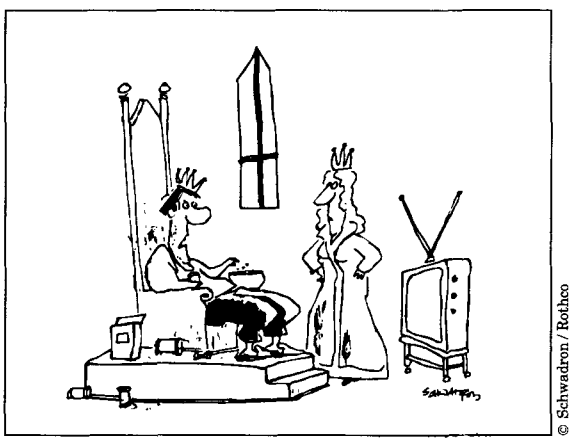
FOR THE RECORD

■ Now that Little Rock has stopped rocking, rumors are flying about the shape of President-elect **Clinton**'s Cabinet—some better, some worse, as Clinton team tries to balance opposing elements of his coalition. First item of speculation, now settled, was whether **Mickey Kantor**, brash Los Angeles lawyer who had headed the campaign, would head transition team. Instead, post went to another L.A. lawyer, **Warren Christopher**, who started out as law clerk to Justice **William O. Douglas** and was deputy secretary of state under **Cyrus Vance** in **Jimmy Carter**'s time. He was named team manager and will work out of Little Rock; **Vernon Jordan**, ex-president of National Urban League, was named team chairman, will work out of D.C. . . . Christopher has supposedly taken himself out of contention for secretary of state; surprisingly, Sen. **Sam Nunn** (Ga.) is said to be angling for State rather than Defense. . . . Kantor may be named White House chief of staff, but also in running are former Arizona Gov. **Bruce Babbitt** (one of 1988's Seven Dwarfs), Arkansas's own Sen. **David Pryor** (1991 ACU rating: 11; ADA rating: 30), and Clinton campaign research director **Betsey Wright**. . . . Mentioned for CIA Director: Sen. **David Boren**, who was staunch during cold war; retired Admiral **William Crowe**, who had been **Ronald Reagan**'s Chairman of Joint Chiefs but wound up opposing Gulf War. Crowe has also been mentioned for Pentagon, as has military-bashing Rep. **Patricia Schroeder**. . . . Treasury contenders include New York banker and industrial-policy enthusiast **Felix Rohatyn**, ex-Fed Chairman **Paul Volcker**, Sen. **Lloyd Bentsen**, and **Robert Altman**, veteran of Carter's Treasury. . . . Harvard oracle **Robert Reich** is gloomy possibility for Economic Policy Advisor.

■ Around the States: Congressional totals are being called GOP defeat, because gain of ten seats in the House is half what was expected. But not since 1960 has a party captured the Presidency while losing seats in the House. . . . Voters did better with ballot initiatives than with candidates. Colorado's Initiative 2, denying homosexuals preferential treatment, won, 53 to 47, while Oregon's over-the-top Initiative 9, essentially ostracizing homosexuals, lost 57 to 43. . . . Iowa's Equal Rights Amendment lost, 52 to 48. . . . Gov. **William Weld**'s Massachusetts Initiative 3, to require all packaging in state to be reduced in size and made out of recyclable stuff, lost 59 to 41. . . . Term limits won in all 14 states where they were on ballot, with majorities ranging from solid (52 to 48 in Washington) to overwhelming (77 to 23 in Florida). . . . Of states that **James Baker**'s electoral-vote strategy targeted for **George Bush** (New Jersey, Ohio, Michigan, Montana, Missouri, South Dakota, Pennsylvania, Kentucky, Louisiana), only South Dakota went for him in the end; others that were close: New Jersey (43 to 41), Ohio (40 to 39). . . . How did recent immigration affect the California vote? Although *L.A. Times* reported deadpan that "A high proportion of non-citizens among Latinos . . . reduces the voting population," percentage of Latinos in electorate went from 7 to 10 since 1988, according to **Mark DiCamillo** of Field Research, and they went overwhelmingly for Democrats: 65 per cent for Clinton, to 23 for Bush and 12 for **Ross Perot**; 61 for **Barbara Boxer**, to 33 for **Bruce Herschensohn**; 66 for **Dianne Feinstein**, to 32 for **John Seymour**. Asians, who account for 4 per cent of California voters, went 33 per cent for Clinton, to 28 for Bush, and 23 for Perot; 52 per cent for Boxer, to 48 for Herschensohn; and 61 for Feinstein, to 39 for Seymour.



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"Oh yeah? Well, show me where it's written that the king has to be an exemplary leader of the people!"

■ While media attention settles on General **Volkogonov**'s suspect **Alger Hiss** revelation, a real tidbit has surfaced from more credible file. **Harvey Klehr** and **John Haynes** report in *American Spectator* that archives of Central Party in Moscow confirm that **Harry Bridges**, leader of Longshoremen's Union, not only was Communist Party member, which Bridges always denied, but was even member of U.S. Central Committee. . . . R I P: **Alexander Dubcek**—early harbinger of change in Central Europe with Prague Spring, deposed by 1968 Soviet invasion—died in car accident last month.

■ Washington Good Guys: Heritage Foundation chief **Ed Feulner** received Order of the Brilliant Star, top civilian honor of Taiwan government. . . . National Journalism Center is accepting applications for 6-week session starting Dec. 14. For info, contact **M. Stanton Evans**, **Chris Warden**, or **Mal Kline**, at NJC, 800 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002; phone: 202-544-1333. Application deadline: Dec. 4.

■ Media notes: In Nov. 2 *NR*, **Charlotte Hays** predicted Clinton victory would bring outburst of stories starting: "The torch was passed to a new generation." Complying so far: **Peter Jennings** of ABC; **David Shribman** and **Jill Abramson** of *Wall Street Journal*; *Newsweek*; and—on its cover, no less—*U.S. News & World Report*. . . . Tip of the hat to *N.Y. Times*, which on July 1, 1990, headed a story on how S&L crisis might lead Mr. Bush to break no-new-taxes pledge: "Democrats Try Not to Gloat and Begin Planning for 1992."

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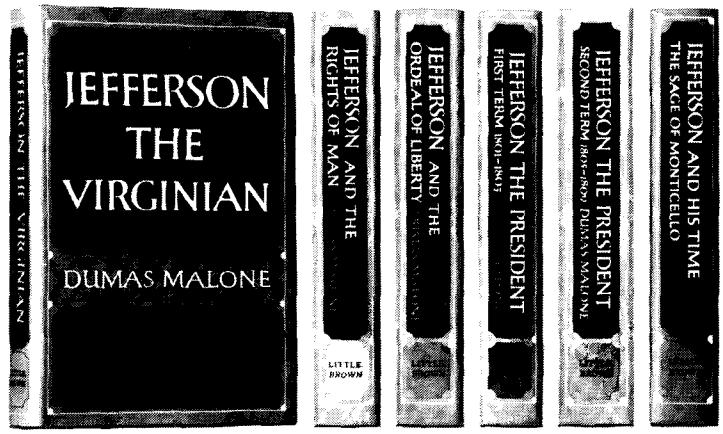

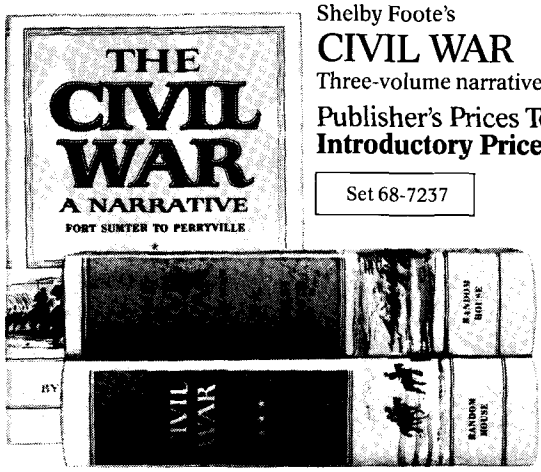

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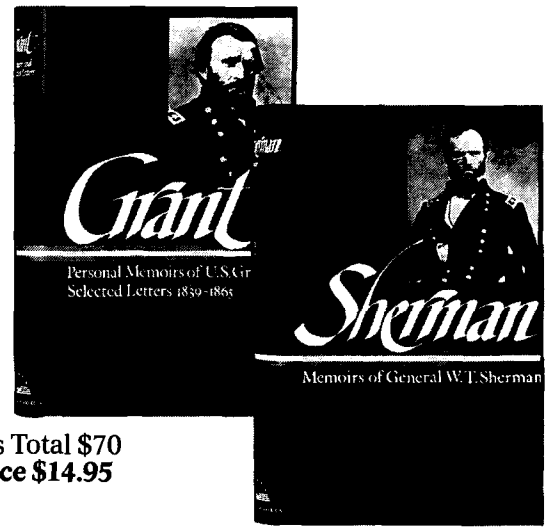

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THE WEEK

■ Don't let that Oath of Office scare you. The U.S. Constitution poses no serious threat to our form of government.

■ It turns out the definition of a "landslide" depends on who's sliding. Bill Clinton's win—with 370 electoral votes, but only a Mondale- or Dukakis-level 43 per cent of the popular vote—was dubbed a "landslide" by several major newspapers, columnists, and TV pundits. But, according to *USA Today*, not *one* of the nation's fifty largest papers saw a landslide in Bush's 1988 victory when he took 53 per cent of the popular vote and racked up 426 electoral votes. For a Republican, it seems, a majority isn't enough for a landslide; for a Democrat it isn't even necessary.

■ A number of Republicans, including several conservatives, are being mentioned (and are mentioning themselves) as candidates for chairman of the Republican National Committee. With the GOP out of the White House, whoever heads the RNC becomes one of the three *ex officio* leaders of the party, along with the Senate and House minority leaders, Bob Dole and Bob Michel, who are unlikely to be replaced. Since Dole is effective but not especially conservative, while Michel is neither effective nor conservative, it's important to have at least one good good-guy. Former Delaware governor Pete du Pont would like to make the post an issue-oriented bully pulpit; Spencer Abraham, a party activist from Michigan, wants to do a nuts-and-bolts job. Our first instinct would be to suggest du Pont as chairman and Abraham as his deputy—since both rhetorical and business skills are needed. But stay tuned.

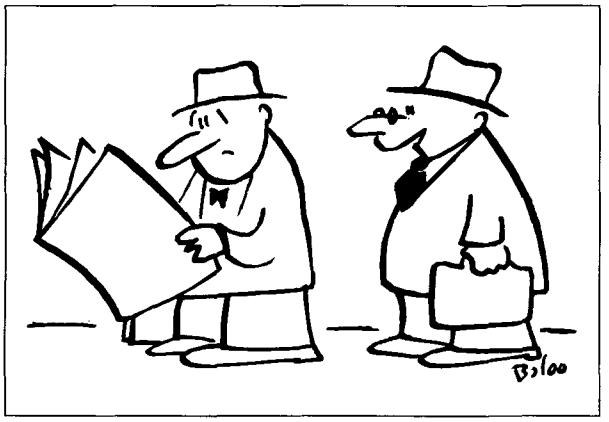
■ Buoyed by the second-highest popular vote of any third party in this century, Ross Perot's supporters have been making noises about giving their movement institutional permanence. It's hard to see how they will manage this. Enduring American third forces have drawn their strength from regional ties (Populists, Dixiecrats) or issues (Socialists, Prohibitionists). The last third party to become a major party, the Republicans, had both. Rosstafarianism has neither. No, we have not forgotten Perot's charts about the deficit, but that is a problem, not a solution—do you shrink it by cutting spending? raising taxes? both? His popularity was created and sustained by his take-charge personality, nicely set off by the evasions of his major-party rivals. In four years, Perot will have at least one new rival, and his one-liners won't be any fresher. If anyone else in his family wants to get married, she will probably be able to do so in peace.

■ The choice was between more taxes, more more taxes, and more more more taxes, and yet they called it an election.

■ Special Prosecutor Lawrence Walsh's persistence in indicting Caspar Weinberger for perjury verges on the fanatical. After all, Mr. Weinberger firmly and wisely opposed dealing with Iran for hostages. His denial that he took notes on secret conversations within the Reagan Administration can be viewed as a legitimate equivocation, given that the sure result of acknowledging the truth would have been just such an invasion of his personal effects as has occurred, with just such political exploitation of them as the Walsh team made during the last days of the election campaign. After spending so much time and money on the inquiry, Mr. Walsh may understandably feel that he needs an important scalp to justify his expenditures, not only to Congress and the media but to himself.

■ Maybe, in a final conciliatory gesture, President Bush should pardon Lawrence Walsh.

■ Feminism in combat boots suffered a setback when the Presidential Commission on the Assignment of Women in the Armed Forces recommended barring women from ground combat, combat planes, submarines, and amphibious assault vessels. In so doing, a majority of panelists recognized some basic truths hitherto concealed in the rush to make the military conform to the norms of a college English department: women prisoners of war will be raped; women do not meet the physical standards achieved by men; admitting women to elite combat units would disturb their cohesion. The liberal media was ready with its own explanation: Bush stacked the panel with



"Don't worry, Pomeroy—politicians are just as afraid of us as we are of them."

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right-wingers. Presumably Commander-in-Chief Clinton will rectify such oversights.

■ In California, the Herschensohn–Boxer race was too close to call until the Friday before the election, when Bob Mulholland, the state Democrats' political director, disrupted a Herschensohn campaign appearance by shouting that the candidate frequents "places where women dance totally nude." Herschensohn confirmed to a reporter that he had visited the club once, on an after-dinner lark, with his girlfriend and another couple; but the visit was so unfurtive that he and the other man, also a television celebrity, signed autographs. Republicans protested the dirty trick, but though Mulholland was suspended without pay, the story had its effect: Herschensohn's campaign was thrown off during the last three days as he was forced to explain and defend himself instead of talking about quotas and congressional reform, as he had planned. Of course he lost the election. (And of course Mulholland was back on the job a couple of days later.) Mrs. Boxer, however, won on sleaze, and must not be allowed to forget it.

■ When Bill Clinton pledged to raise taxes on the "rich," economists noticed that the numbers just didn't add up. A 4 per cent surtax on people earning more than $200,000 would raise at most $12 billion in new taxes, far short of the $150 billion Clinton said he wanted. The mystery now has been solved: Buried deep in companion bills submitted by Representative Dick Gephardt and Senator George Mitchell is an item that would tax every American who had scraped together $200,000 in *total wealth*. This legislation would cut the current estate-tax exemption from $600,000 to $200,000. Taxes would go up for most middle-class homeowners, not just the richest 2 per cent as Clinton advertised. And unlike the income tax, estate-tax liability is computed without taking inflation or the size of the taxpayer's family into account. No wonder the tax apparently preferred by Mr. Clinton has been likened to stealing the nickels from a dead man's eyes.

■ News from the Battlefront: *The Europeans have been advancing steadily across a broad front, fortifying their soybean producers with expanding subsidies to help capture growing market share. The Americans have now escalated with a "smart" bomb—a triple tariff precisely targeted on French Chablis, badly wounding French pride. Pitchforks are being brandished all over France, but morale is high on the American side, where a free-trade Administration is about to be replaced by a more aggressive team much readier to bash allies and protect U.S. producers. The British are scurrying about, trying to mediate before nuclear weapons are invoked.* Thus did the world's great democracies, fresh from their victory over Communism, advertise to their new friends in the East the joys of freedom and the benefits of capitalism. The Europeans, in particular, are setting a fine example of wasteful subsidization, cowardly surrender to farm lobbies, and political disarray that mocks their pretensions to unity. Worst of all is their apparent obliviousness to their strategic need for the American presence in Europe, at a time of growing instabilities on the Continent and a new American Administration with a precarious commitment to the Atlantic connection.

■ Adam Smith, discussing similar matters more than two centuries ago, pointed out that Scotland could produce excellent wine by growing grapes under glass, albeit at twenty times the cost of French or Portuguese growers. But if Scotland wanted to subsidize her wine makers thus, it would be everyone else's gain and her own loss. Smith's advice was to take the tax-subsidized bargain if it's offered, and avoid trade wars which hurt everyone and have a way of turning into real wars.

■ The Yeltsin government recently released documents that puncture lies perpetrated by its Communist predecessors and sometimes given credence by the Western media. For decades the Soviets denied responsibility for the 1940 massacre of more than 25,000 Poles, including thousands of senior officers, in the Katyn Forest. The released documents, including one annotated by Stalin, show that a March 1940 meeting of the Politburo ordered "the supreme punishment—execution by a firing squad" for the Poles. The victims represented their country's social and intellectual elite and a barrier to Communist domination of Poland. Well into the 1980s the Soviets insisted the Nazis had committed the atrocity, and even when Gorbachev apologized to the Poles in 1990, he concealed the high-level complicity in the massacre. In the Korean Air Lines Flight 007 incident, a transcript of the black box recording of the flight, downed by the Soviets in 1983, indicates no radio warning or warning shots, as claimed by the Soviets, before the passenger jet was shot down, killing all 269 aboard, including a U.S. congressman.

Ah, Wilderness

With spitballs at the ready
  And rubber bands pulled back
As thumb and finger steady
  A poisoned-pen attack,
What fun to paste and pillory
  Al, Tipper, Bill, and Hillary.

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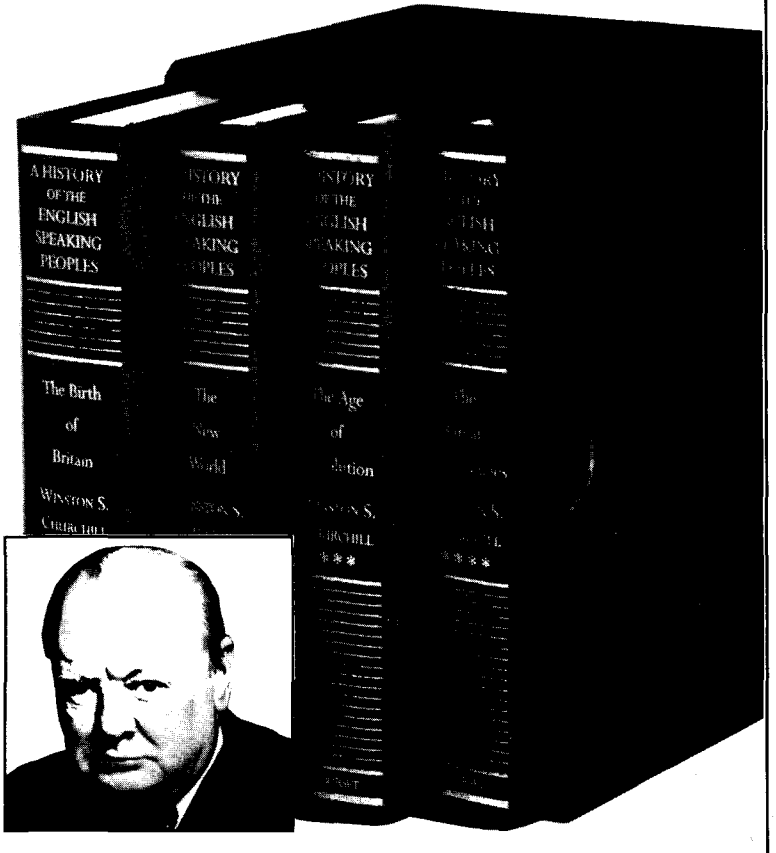

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Other documents reveal the Soviets' cynical decision to maintain KAL 007 was "a large-scale . . . political provocation by the United States." If the transcript of the black box were released, warned one official, "another wave of anti-Soviet hysteria can't be excluded." Communism feared its most bitter enemy—the truth—right until the end.

■ The African National Congress got more than it bargained for when it asked three lawyers (including a prominent independent Johannesburg attorney) to investigate charges of human-rights abuses in ANC-run prison camps in the 1980s. The 74-page report, released in October, was an eye-opener: it documented "staggering brutality," including routine torture, forced confessions, and detention for years without trial, inflicted on the dissident members and suspected spies and other unfortunates whom the ANC corralled in its home-grown concentration camps. Many of those responsible are still employed in the ANC's security department. Nelson Mandela, to his credit, condemned the practices and promised reform. But the revelations only heighten fears of the ANC's totalitarian inclinations. They are also a warning to the Clinton Administration: Apartheid must go; South Africans of all races are entitled to a constitutional democracy that guarantees human rights. But putting the ANC into power was never the objective of U.S. policy, and should not be now.

■ Seventy members of the Italian parliament are being investigated for taking bribes and kickbacks. We can take pride that this sort of thing is not occurring here. Congress is adjourned.

■ Two New York radio stations, one of them the area's most popular, have stopped playing "Boom Bye Bye," a reggae song in which Mr. Buju Banton advocates the murder of homosexuals—two lines translate from Jamaican patois as: "Faggots have to run / Or get a bullet in the head," and gunshots sound after Mr. Banton sings "dem haffi dead" ("They have to die"). Though the song seems to have been played only in New York, his new record company, Mercury, is preparing for national release several public-service announcements that condemn gay bashing. Mr. Donald Suggs, of the Gay and Lesbian Alliance against Defamation, which brought the song's iniquity to public notice, explains: "It's a different position than Ice-T [of "Cop Killer" fame], who was essentially making a political point, addressing the fact that police are involved in the killing of black kids. Here the song is just advocating murdering gay men, and that's crazy." We are of course pleased to learn that there are still some standards, and unsurprised by whose they are.

■ Former New Orleans district attorney Jim Garrison has died, only a year after returning, thanks to Oliver Stone, to national prominence. Stone, of course, made him the hero of his film *JFK*, which posited a conspiracy to murder John Kennedy so vast as to verge on majority rule; Garrison himself appeared in an ironic cameo as Earl Warren. It is remotely possible that there *was* a conspiracy, but if so, it was surely of modest dimensions. And Garrison, in his own 1967 investigation, notably avoided pointing the finger at the New Orleans gangsters who were likelier suspects than the man he targeted, businessman Clay Shaw. He played the anti-establishment loner while using his considerable local power to hound Shaw, who won a quick acquittal but lost his good name. Garrison rode the case to glory and eventually won a second generation of sensational publicity. He used the powers of his office irresponsibly and lived much of the time in a world of fantasy. R I P.

■ Francis Ford Coppola's new film, *Dracula*, is being described as a phantasmagoric spectacle of hordes of vampires having nonstop sex. Sounds like a preview of the next four years in Washington.

Not with a Bang . . .

IN OUR LAST ISSUE, we advised a vote for President Bush on the theory of "*Always keep a hold of Nurse / For fear of finding something worse.*" We expect our pessimism to be confirmed over the next four years. And the fact that Governor Clinton won with a percentage of the popular vote that would ensure a landslide defeat in normal circumstances suggests that most voters shared our mood, if not our conclusion. A Democratic victory was for them, if not something worse, then something not much better than the alternatives. This shoulder-shrugging resignation, however, is less a criticism of an untested President-elect Clinton than of an incumbent President Bush.

For presidential elections are almost invariably a referendum on the last four years. The 1992 election was an unmistakable repudiation of President Bush—the worst showing by an incumbent since William Howard Taft grabbed a mere 23 per cent of the vote in the 1912 three-way race. Pragmat-

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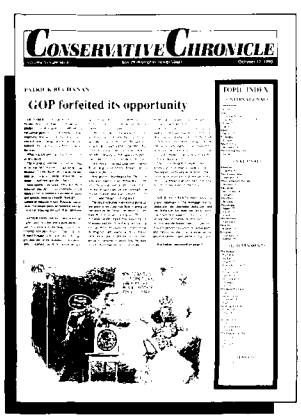

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ic Republicanism failed by its own criterion: it lost.

For many years moderate Republicans, pointing to the landslide against Goldwater in 1964, claimed that conservatives could not win presidential elections; a moderate candidate was needed to capture the center. The evidence of the last 12 years suggests the precise opposite: Mr. Conservative, Ronald Reagan, won an absolute majority in the three-way race of 1980, and a landslide victory in 1984. Mr. Bush, running as Reagan's heir and "outing" his opponent as a liberal, won comfortably in 1988. But when he revealed himself as a warmed-over Rockefeller Republican with a fetish for bipartisanship, this incumbent President won a smaller percentage of the popular vote than the despised Goldwater.

Why? The largest single issue in the voters' minds was plainly the economy. And of the 43 per cent of voters who gave it as their top concern, only 24 per cent voted for President Bush. Indeed, he lost ground on nearly all questions concerning the economy and the size of government. Back in 1980, for instance, Republicans had enjoyed a 56-point margin over the Democrats as the party best able to control government spending. On election day this year, George Bush had only an 8-point lead over Governor Clinton among voters who said they wanted less government and lower taxes.

This was directly traceable to the President's departure from Reaganomics, illustrated most dramatically by the 1990 budget deal. That deal was the essence of moderate Republicanism: a compromise with the Democratic leadership that let overblown government proceed without undue disturbance. Three previous budget deals had increased taxes, spending, and the deficit. But that history was ignored—and repeated. In the decision that probably played the single greatest role in his defeat, Mr. Bush broke his tax pledge to the American people in order to reach a temporary accommodation with a hostile Democratic Congress. His reward? Polls show 22 per cent of voters saying that his breaking his tax pledge was very important in their decision. Of those, 33 per cent voted for Mr. Clinton, a mere 5 per cent for Mr. Bush.

With the budget deal alienating his base and the economy souring, the President nonetheless ignored the pleas a year ago of Jack Kemp, Vin Weber, and others for a tax-cutting economic-growth package. Even if Congress had stonewalled, that would have clarified where he stood and given him a powerful issue. Instead he defended the budget deal, denied the recession, and constantly postponed action. When he was finally driven to admit that the deal was a mistake, he blamed the Democrats, not his strategy of compromise with them, and demanded a Congress that would give him better compromises.

If Mr. Bush defended his failures, he curiously failed to defend his successes. When Clinton and Perot spoke of 12 years of failure, he never pointed out that most of those years had been very good indeed—the longest peacetime expansion in U.S. history. He gave only perfunctory praise to his great predecessor. He seemed sometimes to believe the liberal charge that Reaganomics had been a costly mistake—apparently forgetting that he had been a leading member of the Administration responsible for it. As a result, he was unable to cite the success of Reaganomics after a shaky recessionary start as a precedent for his own economic difficulties. Indeed, Mr. Bush could never stick to a consistent analysis of, or solution to, the economy's malaise. Even when he had a critical and popular success like his speech to the Detroit Economic Club, economics never became a campaign theme. Instead, his chosen topic was Character—his character as war hero and grandfather, Clinton's as draft-dodger and ladies' man. This contrast, he hoped, would make him someone you would trust to manage the government. Michael Dukakis had lost an election when he fought on the theme of "competence over ideology." "Character over record" proved no more successful.

With his pragmatic embrace of the status quo Mr. Bush had also abandoned the strongest element unifying President Reagan's coalition: anti-Washington sentiment. This issue was seized first by Republican Pat Buchanan, then by Democrat Jerry Brown. Ross Perot exploited it most effectively, if insincerely, drawing 17 per cent of registered Republicans, 13 per cent of Democrats, and 30 per cent of independents. It is almost beyond belief that a post-Reagan Republican President could surrender this appeal to his opponents.

But Mr. Bush compromised to his own disadvantage on many issues on which he enjoyed majority support. He seemed incapable of capitalizing on that support to change the terms of national debate as Reagan had done. He had popular backing, for instance, for his veto of the quota bill. But he ignored Jack Kemp's positive strategy of extending opportunities to disadvantaged black Americans by incentives for business and capital to move into depressed

This Won't Hurt

The unseen hand of Adam Smith
  That ran affairs until
Lord Keynes gave governments a tool
  And businessmen a chill,
Will join the other reliquiae
  Entombed or under glass
As Mr. Clinton's megawatts
  Course through the middle class.

W. H. VON DREELE

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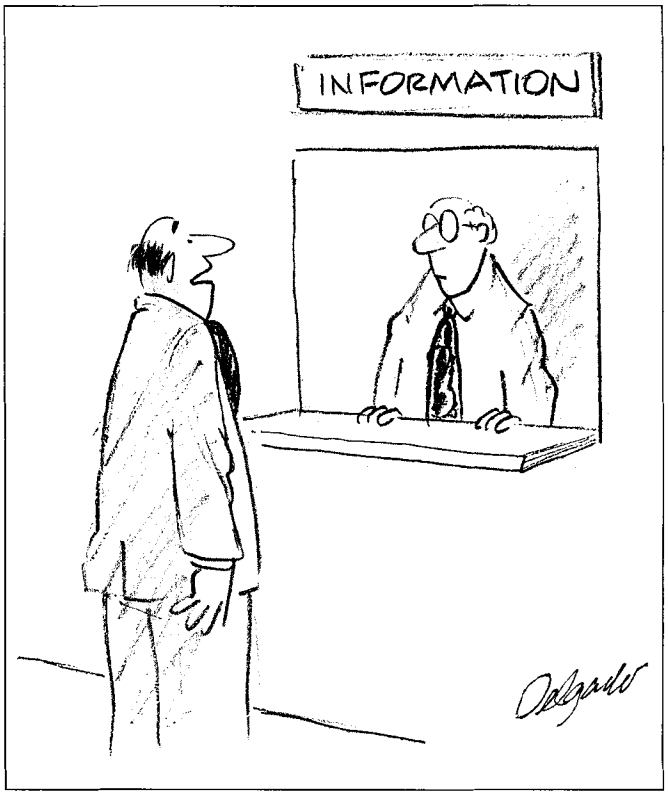
areas, not by court-mandated quotas. Nor did he question the establishment convention that black Americans were represented by the "civil-rights leadership." So when that leadership seemed upset by the Clarence Thomas confirmation, Mr. Bush made the obvious concession and signed the quota bill. Yet his support among blacks *dropped*—from 12 per cent in 1988 to 11 per cent this year (and, not coincidentally, his support among whites fell from 59 per cent to 41 per cent—that is, from 19 points over Dukakis to 2 over Clinton).

A politician wins elections more by shaping the questions than by answering them. That is why a conservative, like Mr. Reagan, who puts the issues that benefit him on the national agenda, is likely to win more support than a moderate, like Mr. Bush, who merely claims to be more trustworthy in pursuing whatever goals are already on that agenda—liberal ones, usually. Thus, the Democrats made health care an important issue for 19 per cent of voters, and took 67 per cent of their votes; Vice President Quayle made family values an important issue for 15 per cent of voters, and won 65 per cent of *their* votes. He might have won 65 per cent of a larger number of voters if the Baker–Bush team, frightened by controversy, had not abandoned the issue. But that is the story of Mr. Bush's entire campaign.

OTHER CONTESTS nationwide underline the failure of moderate Republicanism. California had voted for every Republican presidential candidate since 1952 except Barry Goldwater; Mr. Bush finished nearly 1.5 million votes behind Mr. Clinton. He was aided in the fiasco by hyper-unpopular Governor Pete Wilson, a moderate Republican so like Bush that he even cut his own budget deal. Wilson–Bush clone John Seymour did even worse than Bush, losing his Senate race by 1.7 million votes. Hit by a double moderate whammy, the California GOP lost big in congressional races and in the State Senate and Assembly, where redistricting should have resulted in substantial gains. The strongest statewide Republican candidate by far was unapologetic conservative Bruce Herschensohn, who lost by 500,000 votes, around 5 per cent, dragged down by the President's coattails and a Democratic smear campaign against him.

Contrast California's results with those in Michigan, where voters rewarded conservative Governor John Engler—who has cut taxes and spending, launched innovative welfare reform, and proposed stiffer penalties for drug-related crimes—with possible GOP control (pending recounts) of both houses of the state legislature for the first time since 1962. The GOP also made gains in both houses of the Wisconsin legislature, ratifying the conservative welfare and education innovations of Governor Tommy Thompson. All this, while Mr. Bush went from 54



"What does Jesse want?"

per cent of the vote in Michigan in 1988 to 37 per cent this time and 48 per cent to 36 per cent in Wisconsin.

Any remaining doubts that the conservative message sells should be dispelled by the results of the major ballot initiatives—issues without candidates. Colorado's voters endorsed a ban on special-interest gay-rights legislation. Term limits, an anti-Washington issue to which the President gave only reluctant and belated lip service, won handily in all 14 states. (Some good initiatives that lost turn out, on examination, to be tainted by Governor Pete Wilson's endorsement.)

In rejecting Mr. Bush, a plurality of voters put Mr. Clinton in the White House. They will give him a chance to govern, and pass judgment again in 1996. Conservatives and Republicans should take heart from the fact that Mr. Clinton has *not* as of yet restored the Democratic Party to majority status; indeed, he added very little to the hard Democratic base vote, that of Walter Mondale in 1984. Mondale drew 40 per cent of the vote; Clinton 43. Mondale was supported by 7 per cent of Republicans, 36 per cent of independents, and 74 per cent of Democrats; Clinton by 10, 38, and 77 respectively. Mondale drew 70 per cent of liberals, 47 of moderates, and 17 of conservatives; Clinton, 68, 48, and 18. Mondale drew 53 per cent of union households, Clinton 55; Mondale, 22 per cent of white born-again Christians and 45 per cent of Catholics, Clinton, 23 and 44. Clinton did slightly worse than Mondale among blacks (82 to 90) and slightly better among whites (39 to 35); the

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two drew the same 62 per cent of the Hispanic vote. In short, though exit polls indicated that Perot voters would have divided evenly between Bush and Clinton if the temperamental tycoon had not been on the ballot, they account almost perfectly for the aggregate demographic difference between Reagan's landslide and Bush's loss.

Restoring the conservative coalition to its natural majority status is a matter of avoiding Mr. Bush's mistakes, and of understanding that the key to political popularity is not agreeing with a majority, but getting a majority to agree with you. Firm, principled leadership, rooted in an accurate understanding of the nation's problems (too much government, and a governing class that maintains its power by enlarging the government), is the best way to create that majority—the essence *both* of governing well *and* of winning elections. Mr. Bush might have been able to convince himself that a liberal Republican strategy was the best route to winning political power; no future Republican leader can have the slightest excuse for making that mistake again.

Whose Mandate?

GOVERNOR CLINTON won the election and, like all Presidents, is entitled to exercise the powers of the Presidency enumerated by the Constitution. But Mr. Clinton is being granted additional powers by major news organizations: a "mandate for change" by *Time*, for example; a "decisive mandate for change" by *Newsweek*. Insofar as its meaning can be discerned, a "mandate" is a President's right to get his program through Congress because he enjoys overwhelming popular support. Does Mr. Clinton have one?

Unless a mandate can be smaller than a majority, our own view is: probably not. Mr. Clinton got 43 per cent in a three-way race, which race, moreover, was three-way largely because he was the likely alternative to George Bush. Even Arkansas gave him only 54 per cent, and he got an even 50 in only two other states: New York and Maryland. He got less of the total popular vote than Michael Dukakis, who was not widely thought to enjoy a mandate.

Moreover, his party lost ten seats in the House and may not gain a single seat (pending results in Georgia) in the Senate. The Democrats have won a monopoly on power almost by default. A monopoly without a mandate is a tricky position, now that there is no Republican steward on whom debt, deficit, tax-and-spend politics, and AIDS can be blamed. The Democrats have been shrieking that all these "problems" cry out for "solutions." Now they can go ahead and solve them.

If the Democrats have no mandate from the voters, however, they enjoy a historic one from the media. E. J. Dionne Jr. writes in the *Washington Post* that this election has "overturn[ed] the verdict reached in 1980." Somehow Mr. Clinton's 43 per cent has retroactively nullified what amounts to three Reagan landslides. Mr. Reagan, of course, never won a media mandate. He now turns out to be beatable, provided he isn't on the ballot.

Mr. Clinton has been very lucky, and he has also taken skillful advantage of his luck. During the campaign he was shrewd enough to present himself as a moderate. But now his media allies are signaling that he has their blessing to rule as a liberal: this is what mandate-talk is really all about. The more he tries to use his mandate, the less he will turn out to have one.

Churchill Would Agree

Though the French can be fun on a frolic,
They gave Caesar a case of the colic,
  And as Clinton will learn
  From intestinal burn,
It's a bitch to pretend one's pro-Gallic.

W. H. VON DREELE

What's the Name Of the First Baseman?

THE Bush–Quayle buttons had scarcely been carted to the compacter when attention turned to the 1996 GOP nomination. Early handicapping in the press gave Jack Kemp the lead.

We are inclined to think that any nomination today of the next Republican candidate is a bit premature. A week is a long time in politics, four years an eternity, and the market (a/k/a the primaries) will decide the nominee. For the moment, however, most conservatives will feel comfortable with Mr. Kemp as their leading spokesman. As a congressman, he helped fashion the economic issues which propelled Ronald Reagan into the White House, and which propelled George Bush out of it once he ignored them. As HUD Secretary, Mr. Kemp was a lonely voice articulating an agenda of government downsizing and personal empowerment which might have given the President something to run on. In

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both these incarnations, he has been steadfast on the abortion issue, which gives him a tie to the GOP's socially conservative wing, while his energy and ingenuousness make him personally attractive to Republicans and non-Republicans alike.

Jack Kemp has his work cut out for him over the next four years, however. The downside of Kemp's upbeat nature is that he seems to believe that all stories can have happy endings, and (relatedly) that none of his opponents need be enemies. As a result, he has been reluctant to engage issues which a nationally successful conservative movement must address (crime, quotas, the culture) and which other conservative spokesmen (Dan Quayle, William Bennett, Dick Cheney, Patrick Buchanan) have tackled. Kemp must also overcome Republican liberals—incompetent and dull-witted ones like Pete Wilson, and intelligent ones like William Weld.

Kemp, who has spent two decades on Capitol Hill or in the Cabinet, has no need to prove himself as an officeholder. He will have four years he can devote entirely to affirming his position as an intellectual leader. We wish him—and Mr. Quayle, Mr. Bennett, Mr. Cheney, and Mr. Buchanan—well.

Growling Again

BORIS YELTSIN issued a decree on October 29 halting the promised withdrawal of the estimated 40,000 Russian troops in Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania. He expressed a "profound concern" over the treatment of the Russian-speaking minorities in the three Baltic states, dropping the pretense that the halt was due mainly to the shortage of housing for the returning troops in Russia.

This alarming turn of events reflects a surge of nationalism in Russia, fueled by economic hardship. The breakup of the USSR left 25 million Russians stranded in the newly independent states outside Russia; in some of those new states (including particularly Estonia and Latvia), the Russian minorities are victims of blatant discrimination.

The West should advise the Balts that this intolerance is a blunder and an offense. Nevertheless, the West is even less able to tolerate a Russia that threatens force against its neighbors. If Russia ever re-emerges as a threat to the West, it will begin by reasserting its hegemony inside the borders of the old USSR—and that is the implication of its present course. Whether Mr. Yeltsin is doing this willingly or under pressure, the West's duty is the same—to use our leverage to press him to desist. If he is only yielding to domestic pressures, we strengthen his hand by demonstrating the high price to be paid—including the potential loss of Western aid—if Russia persists in this bullying.

Crime without Punishment

WHEN black teenager Lemrick Nelson Jr. was charged with murdering Hasidic divinity student Yankel Rosenbaum during the Crown Heights riots last summer, it looked like an airtight case. Cops testified that they had found a bloody knife in Nelson's pocket, and that he had confessed the crime. Last month, however, a jury acquitted Nelson, accepting a key defense argument that since there was no independent confirmation of police testimony, such as fingerprints on the knife or a videotape of Nelson's confession, the cops could have made the whole thing up. "What do you do with people who have so low an opinion of police officers?" asked Brooklyn District Attorney Charles J. Hynes.

Mr. Hynes, it will be remembered, was the man brought in to ensure that the maximum charges were brought in the Howard Beach case (black victim, white assailants). He produced what was required by liberal opinion and the authorities' fear of black rioting. The authorities have no fear of Hasidic riots, and liberal opinion is complacent about black crime.

The *New York Times*, which beat the drums for "justice" (i.e., white guilt) in the Howard Beach, Bensonhurst, and Rodney King cases, wrote a soothing editorial explaining that the Crown Heights evidence was weak, and blaming the New York City policemen's union for "feed[ing] the public perception of callous arrogance," thus "forfeit[ing] public faith." Average New Yorkers long ago lost faith in the *Times*'s liberal arrogance, which rarely impinges on their lives (most of them read the tabloids). But the double erosion, first of public order, now of the judicial system itself, consistently misdiagnosed when not actively encouraged by the *Times*, impinges on them directly. Under present conditions, their only recourse is to hope they are somewhere else when criminal individuals, or whole communities, decide that they have been aggrieved. And eventually, if these fears are not assuaged by the authorities, white New Yorkers will go somewhere else.

Hisstoriography

'HISS'S wartime controller was the leading NKVD illegal in the United States, Iskhak Abdulovich Akhmerov . . ." So records Oleg Gordievsky, one of the most important KGB officers ever to defect to the West, in his 1990 memoir. Gordievsky's detailed inside account only added to the avalanche of evidence already corroborating Whittaker Chambers's charges that Alger Hiss, key State Department aide under FDR, spied

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for the Soviet Union. The most authoritative analysis was (and remains) *Perjury*, by historian Allen Weinstein, who began his enquiry believing in Hiss's innocence but, by the time his exhaustive research was completed, had become convinced that Hiss was a consummate liar. Professor Weinstein pursued the Hiss records with KGB officials earlier this year, only to be met with (rather revealing) hints that the KGB was reluctant to release files that could embarrass agents who were still alive.

Thus, we are highly skeptical of the recent "revelation" by Russian military historian Dmitri Volkogonov that he could find no document in KGB archives to substantiate the espionage charges against Hiss. (See "On the Right," p. 62.)

Regrettably, both the KGB and Soviet military intelligence, while they have changed their names, remain under their old management, still headed and staffed by men who flourished under Communist rule. Hotbeds of reform they are not. Unlike the relatively liberated archives of, say, the Foreign Ministry or even the Communist Party Central Committee, intelligence files are still under rigid control. General Volkogonov (author of a scathing biography of Stalin) may be acting in good conscience, but the five-week "search" carried out at his request lacks all credibility. All that has been disclosed is the general's letter announcing that he could find no incriminating evidence; the files themselves remain under lock and key (if they weren't shredded a long time ago). Until outside scholars are given free access to the archives—which won't happen under present management—the "exoneration" of Alger Hiss must be taken with a pinch of sulphur.

NOTES & ASIDES

■ Dear Mr. Buckley:

I have been having trouble with a used car I purchased recently, from Bill Clinton's Demo Used Cars. It seemed OK when I first drove it, but it has since been devouring all my cash. Bill promised he would fix everything that went wrong, but he has not delivered as advertised on CBS, NBC, ABC, and CNN.

The car is a 1954 Ford Democrat Special. When I took it to Andre Marrou's repair shop, this is what I discovered:

The car had been driven four trillion miles without any maintenance or repairs. It is in need of an overhaul, and it pulls to the left when I try to turn right.

I took it back to Clinton's and he told me that my neighbor, George Bush, had taken it for a test drive just before me and he was responsible. However, government records show that the Democrats had been in possession of this vehicle from 1954, and still owned it while President Bush was briefly testing it. Now my banker, Ross Perot, says that I own it, and that I still must make payments even though Congress put all the miles on it. What shall I do?

Stumped and nearly broke in Tucson,
Zak A. Klemmer
Tucson, Ariz.

Dear Mr. Klemmer: Well, why not give up driving? Cordially, WFB

■ Dear Bill:

The enclosed full-page ad (in the *Los Angeles Times*) from the "99 cents only" stores shows that inflation is under control ("nothing over 99 cents ever") in Los Angeles.

But can you imagine 12 Trojan lubricated latex condoms for 99 cents? How can they do it? Do you suppose someone is ripping off the school district? Or are the store's student employees getting condoms free from the schools and then reselling them?

Do schools give out 12 at once? If so, does this encourage multiple partners or just more sex?

What if these condoms break? In our litigious society, will the buyers sue the 99-cent stores? If so, could the condoms be cheaper if these stores paid less in liability insurance?

Do you think there is any chance that the public-school bureaucracy spends more than 99 cents in administrative costs in distributing 12 condoms? If so, maybe this store should distribute them free with a government subsidy amounting to 99 cents. Of course, without a means test, this might mean that sexually active people able to afford 99 cents for 12 condoms might get a subsidy.

Will you ask Herb Stein about the elasticity of condoms?

Cordially,
Arnie [Steinberg]
Calabasas, Calif.

Dear Arnie: The demand, if felt, is inelastic. Best regards, Bill

■ Dear Mr. Buckley:

Ah, will the "usage" letters never cease?

Re the October 5 issue: 1. In "Right Data" the author writes of "mortality rate." A redundancy. Mortality = death rate. 2. The flagrant use of "blatant" for "flagrant" in this and several past issues.

Hate to be picky, picky, picky, but then I'm picky about the magazines I read too.

Sincerely,
David G. Walker
Marble Falls, Tex.

Dear Mr. Walker: Glad to have your corrections. Are you picky also about who becomes President? Cordially, **—WFB**

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ON THE SCENE

Year of Living Dangerously

MIDGE DECTER

Amy Wasserman

NEW YORK

FROM WHAT one heard, it was the same everywhere: the polling places were mobbed all day; no one had ever seen the like.

We had been told that an unprecedented number of new voters were being registered, but that had somehow not produced the inference that one might have to stand in line for an hour or more to reach the voting machine. The question was, *Cui bono?* For whose sake were all these people braving the considerable noise, discomfort, and disorder in places like school gymnasiums, both architecturally and acoustically uncongenial to the day's purposes?

In New York, and clearly in many other places as well, there seemed in one sense to be no mystery about the answer. That Clinton was going to carry the state handily had long been taken for granted. Yet as one waited one's turn the main impression was not of being in the presence of any serious partisan determination, let alone enthusiasm. There was in fact a good deal of enthusiasm—high cheer might be a better term—but Clinton in no way seemed to be its target. On the contrary. What all these people seemed to be simultaneously cheered, surprised, and amused by was themselves taking part in this mighty turnout.

In New York City you can always tell when crowds of strangers are sharing a moment of civic outrage or civic happiness: they begin to strike up easy conversations with one another—otherwise an uncommon experience. And what could be heard over the din in many a polling place were all sorts of stranger-to-stranger exchanges about this being democracy in action, all right, quite often followed by the observation that it was a great pity all this action had no better objects than this year's candidates for the Presidency.

By the morning after the election, the sentiments expressed in New York's polling places proved (as New Yorkers' sentiments so often do, to the chagrin of many) to be nationwide. Clinton had way more than enough electoral votes, but he nevertheless had received no ringing popular mandate. Democracy in action indeed. Given the grossness of elections as a tool for measuring popular feeling, it is astonishing how close the voters can sometimes come to a nice calibration of their political sentiments.

What, then—to borrow a locution once the favorite of pundits past—were they trying to tell us? The universal shibboleth of the 1992 campaign was "change." Every candidate spoke passionately of the need for it and claimed to be its true agent—even, comically enough, George Bush. Moreover, many of the voters questioned during post-election television interviews said either that they believed it was time for, or in some cases that they were positively yearing for, a change. "A change," of course, was an easy term to grasp; it simply, and circularly, meant a vote against George Bush. But the word "change," as it slipped from the tongues of all three contenders and subsequently from those of a few inarticulate voters, remained little more than a pious incantation.

In a not unrelated way the exit polls found that the overriding issue for the overwhelming majority of Clinton voters was the economy—and it goes without saying that this would have been true for the 19 per cent who went for Perot as well. But again, to know that is to know less than many people might think. Clearly the economy has been making so slow a recovery from recession that a lot of people are afraid the happy old days may not come again. Then there are those who have lost their jobs, many of them probably permanently. And the President fell down badly when it came to the task of explaining to the unemployed in the North that some of the jobs Bill Clinton had "created" in Arkansas were jobs that had been moved south by employers looking for cheaper, and possibly more grateful and cooperative, labor. There's no question, in any case: left, right, and center, the President had failed to assure a lot of people that better economic days were coming, and they were pleased to punish him for it. On the other hand a not insignificant sampling of Wall Streeters, frankly professing themselves to be unsure about whether or not Clinton would do great economic harm, nevertheless were insouciant about his election; many, we may never know *how* many, voted for him. If the economy were the only issue, why would they be so pleased to be taking what they themselves freely admit is a possibly grave risk?

And as for the middle-class independents—those people only recently known as Reagan Democrats and now so important an element in the Clinton vote—where is the evidence of their faith that Bill Clinton could and would bring them better times? True, he promised to spend some money on jobs, but aren't these the very people who gravitated to Reagan in the first place out of a bitter and cynical under-

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standing of just where in the end government spending always goes?

And above all, where in the atmosphere of those polling places were the fear, anger, frustration, outrage we had been hearing so much about? "I can't lose," said a friend while waiting for election returns. "If Clinton beats Bush, I will be pleased, and if Bush beats Clinton, I won't really mind." She was almost surely speaking for a multitude. And, she added, "Just think of the chagrin of those once taken-for-granted Democratic front-runners—Bill Bradley, Sam Nunn, and most especially Mario Cuomo—who stayed out because at the beginning Bush had such high approval ratings. How they must be gnashing their teeth! Thinking about them makes me happy, too."

Peggy Noonan came close in a *New York Times* op-ed piece when she said that, in choosing Clinton over Bush, the voters were opting for nervousness over gloom. But nervousness doesn't seem exactly right, either; the mood, while no doubt jittery, was sunnier than that. In electing Clinton the voters were—somewhat timidly, to be sure—deliberately choosing the unknown. For the first time since, let us roughly say, 1950, Americans were going to the polls with no cloud of national danger hanging over their heads. They may have been on one side of the issue or another. They may even, as the experts so tiresomely keep saying, have been "voting their pocketbooks"—though that is a just plain dumb way to talk about the subtle messages American voters have managed to convey over the years. But the cold war had been there, cautioning, sometimes threatening, always declaring limits. Now the voters were liberated. Like those Wall Streeters, people wanted knowingly to take a risk, to experience the feeling that life itself was not at stake. To be unknown and unexpected, as were both Bill Clinton and Ross Perot, was a distinct advantage—and together they took 62 per cent of the vote.

And so things are for no good reason going to be very cheerful for a longer time than is normally given to presidential honeymoons. Here will finally be the celebration of the new world configuration—never call it order. And for the Bush voters, there will be the bitter amusement of knowing that, as Senator Moynihan pointed out, it's the Democrats' deficit now. □

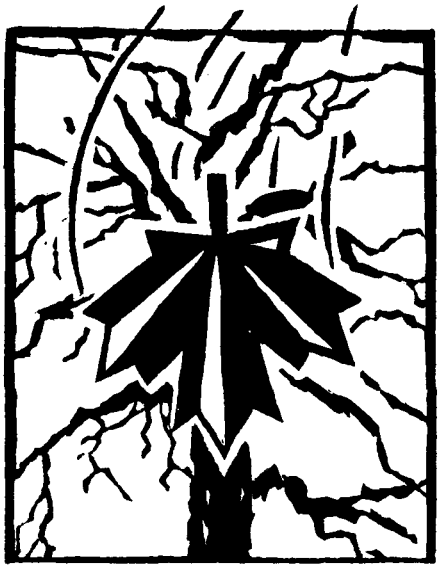
Oh? Canada?

PETER BRIMELOW

MONTREAL

FIGHT or switch: these are the classic options when a minority is in danger of being swallowed by a majority. In Canada, as the province of Quebec has emerged as a French-speaking state on the European model, a few ordinary Quebec Anglophones (Ottawa jargon for English-speakers) are fighting, through their own Equality Party. And many have left. But their leaders, who historically have also been Canada's leaders, pioneered a third course. They escaped into fantasy.

Canadian politics since mid century have basically been a series of increasingly absurd attempts to bribe Quebec to stay in the confederation. The losers have been the rest of English Canada, particularly the West. The short-term winners (since the Francophone *Québecois* aren't really interested) have been the disproportionately bilingual



John Hart

Montreal Anglo elite, who get to dream up and administer the bribes—most recently, Canada's Quebec-based prime minister, Brian Mulroney.

The trees were bare and the year was clearly dying when I visited Montreal to film an episode of PBS's U.S.–Canadian talk show *The Editors* just before the October 26 referendum on Mulroney's latest constitutional bribe. But the heavy Quebec snow had not yet appeared—and the Anglo elite was still talking about a last-minute turnaround in the polls, although they were looking pretty stressed.

In the event, the referendum was a devastating and richly deserved defeat for Canada's entire political establishment. Mulroney's proposal was supported by all three major political parties, by every major media outlet, including the nominally impartial government-owned television network (radio talk-show hosts, being more skeptical, were ordered by federal regulators to balance call-ins between Yes and No every 15 minutes), and by massive advertising spending shaken loose from credulous corporations. But it still lost everywhere.

It lost overall, 45 to 55 per cent. It lost in Quebec, 43 to 56, but even more heavily in the West—32 to 68 in British Columbia. It lost in the electoral districts of each of the three main party leaders. It even lost in establishment-dominated Ontario, outside the Toronto metropolis, carrying the province overall by a fraction of a percentage point. The main Indian ("native peoples") negotiator denounced the result as racism, since the package constitutionalized special bribes to Indian politicians as well as other powerful spending constituencies. Then it turned out that a majority of Indians had voted No too.

I must admit that I view all this with a certain grim satisfaction. I occupy a narrow ecological niche in Canada as one of the few conservative commentators on the country. Six years ago, I published a book, *The Patriot Game: Canada and the Canadian Question Revisited*, which achieved a cult notoriety by arguing that it was impossible to square the Canadian constitutional circle in such a way as to prevent Quebec's historically inevitable separation. And actually undesirable—such efforts simply worked to keep the English Canadian center-Left in power, just as the Democratic Party survives by manipulating minorities in the United States.

The whole Quebec problem (I said)

Mr. Brimelow is a Senior Editor at Forbes.

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Orthodox Catholics: DON'T DESPAIR!

Anne Roche Muggeridge, daughter-in-law of convert Malcolm Muggeridge, has said in her recent book, *The Desolate City: Revolution in the Catholic Church* (Harper & Row): "Because the integrity of its message has been betrayed, the Catholic Church is in ruins. Yet even now there are converts, of exceptionally high quality, and their number is increasing with the tenure of the present Pope. Catholics watched with a mixture of pity and amusement as the excellent Anglo-Catholic *New Oxford Review* argued and agonized itself into the [Roman] Catholic Church. I know a substantial number of recent converts like this and am much edified by their purity and ardour. Seven of them are my godchildren, and I must confess that some of us, to our shame, earnestly tried to delay them, on the grounds of the growing disorder in the Catholic Church. They forced their way past us anyway, thank God. They come because at the highest level of Catholic teaching, the doctrine of the faith, though much embattled, remains uncompromised and is as fearlessly proclaimed by John Paul II as by Peter, Paul, Ignatius, or Augustine. These new Catholics and the extraordinary Pope to whom they belong are a very present comfort when one is tempted to despair."

Over the last quarter century, the number of converts to Roman Catholicism slowed to a trickle. But now, a new wave of converts is entering the Church. What's more, contrary to the shibboleth that Catholicism is a superstitious religion for the ignorant, an unusually high proportion of the new Catholics consists of writers and intellectuals. Among them, it may be hoped, is another Chesterton, another Maritain, another Newman, another Ronald Knox, another Dorothy Day, another Gerard Manley Hopkins, another Edith Stein – converts all.

The new converts are not attracted to the diluted Catholicism of the Hans Kungs, the Charles Currans, or those who sign ads favoring legal abortion. No, they are attracted by the Catholicism of the ages, the Magisterium, and the inspiring leadership of the current Pope.

The forum for the new generation of converts is the NEW OXFORD REVIEW, a monthly magazine that takes its name from the 19th-century Oxford Movement in England. Today there is a new Oxford Movement afoot in America. Among the converts to Roman Catholicism who have written for the REVIEW are Sheldon Vanauken, John C. Cort, Walker Percy, L. Brent Bozell, Avery Dulles, and Peter Kreeft. But the REVIEW isn't just for converts. Most of our writers are cradle Catholics and a significant minority belongs to various other churches. Amazingly, while the REVIEW is a lightning rod for "papist" pilgrims, it is also ecumenical in spirit. And we cover the full range of issues of concern to today's reflective and believing Christians, including the quest for a more just and compassionate society.

If you want to recapture the excitement of when you first really believed, if you feel inundated by "bad news" about the Church, if you despair of all the moral laxity and doubt and dissension within her portals but seek a remedy for that despair, or if you're searching for a "face" of Catholicism that is spiritually vibrant, solidly prolife, doctrinally sound, and socially engaged, it's time for you to subscribe to the NEW OXFORD REVIEW!

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was nothing more than a bone in English Canada's throat. Eventually, English Canadians will come to see the problem differently: not as, Will Quebec secede? but as, Should it be expelled? Which is what the Malaysians did with Singapore. And it's what the Czechs are doing with the Slovaks right now, a parallel so striking that almost no Canadians seem to have been informed about it.

But still, while taping *The Editors*, I was drowned out by my Canadian fellow panelists' cries of shock and horror when I started talking about Quebec's inevitable exit. My next point was lost in the din: that it will sooner or later dawn on Western provinces like British Columbia and Alberta, net tax contributors to Ottawa, that there is no reason to be pushed around in the Confederation when the U.S. is guaranteeing them defense and free trade.

There is some hypocrisy in the public protestations. Many members of the Canadian establishment have long been privately pessimistic about keeping Canada together. At least one came out of the closet after the referendum disaster. Journalist Peter C. Newman, the Great Cham of the anti-American "Canadian Nationalism" invented by Canadian liberals in the 1960s, told the *New York Times*'s Andrew H. Malcolm that "I hate to see it, but yes. I think Quebec will drift into separatism. The Atlantic provinces have more in common with New England. Out West . . . British Columbia, Alberta, Oregon, Washington, Idaho, and Montana are discussing regional cooperation."

Newman is not a serious political thinker, but he is a good gauge of what's safe to say. Of course, the Canadian elite's inhibition has led to intense cognitive dissonance, often cruelly deceiving foreign Canada-watchers. Thus, Malcolm's own 1985 book on Canada contained virtually no reference to the Quebec problem or to bribes like the bilingualism policy.

Snow will soon blanket Montreal and Canada. And under it the Canadian elite will hibernate. Canadian politics are distinguished not by the will to power, but by the will to complacency. This is what happened in 1976, after the separatist *Parti Québecois* shattered the previous constitutional arrangement by winning power in Quebec.

But denial cannot last forever. There must be a federal election by the end of 1993. Two new parties have emerged on the federal level: the conservative-populist Reform Party in the West, and the separatist *Bloc Québecois* in Quebec. Both urged a No vote in the referendum. On present form, they will one day hold the balance of power in the House of Commons. Then, to hold on to office, some previously ardent federalist politician (former Tory leader Joe Clark?) will do a deal on the back of an envelope behind the Speaker's chair. It will take, oh, two and a half minutes.

What will be on the envelope? It's hard to say, because even conservatives in Canada fear to speculate in case they are blamed for the Confederation's demise. But the obvious solution is something like the pre–Jacques Delors European Community: a customs union, maybe a common market, sovereign states, vestigial supra-national institutions. English Canadian provinces could decide among themselves how closely they wanted to remain linked together. In the process, they could dump Ottawa's interventionist redistributivism, which is the key reason Canadian economic performance lags that of the United States.

Liberals on both sides of the border will hate this triumph for the nation-state—particularly if some provinces apply to join the American Union, as they might. But October 26 showed that terror tactics don't always work. And the Montreal Anglo elite have a fourth option that should appeal to their snobbery: emulating the *très chic* Anglo-Argentineans. □

Now They Tell Us

TOM BETHELL

WASHINGTON, D.C.

WHEN Bill Clinton's margin of victory materialized, CBSman Dan Rather pronounced the "Reagan–Bush era" over, thus conflating the two Presidencies. In the *Washington Post*, E. J. Dionne boldly decided that the election had "overturned the verdict of 1980." Wrong, E. J. It was not the voters but George Bush who rejected Reagan. It was Bush who sought a "kinder, gentler America"; who imposed a huge tax increase in a recession; who permitted spending increases to be called spending cuts; who abolished a basic civil right, the presumption of innocence, in the guise of "expanding" civil rights; who admitted alcoholics to the ranks of the handicapped, and who added tens of thousands of pages of new regulations to the Federal Register. Bush lost the election by departing from the policies of his predecessor, not by adhering to them.

Even before the election, however, the press corps was spreading the word that President Bush was sinking because the GOP had moved too far to the right. In a confusing article in *The New York Times Magazine* in October, William Safire warned us of Bush's abiding propensity—inconspicuous to the rest of us—to play with fire on the right. "I was a Bush-watcher long before I thought it would ever be useful," his article began, "and may be able to pinpoint the time he was seized by his inordinate fear of running without solid support from the far Right." Oh, so that was it, then: Bush was in trouble because he was just too enamored of his friends on the Right, and had been since 1970. Here was a famous pundit taking leave of his common sense.

Safire, who calls himself a "card-carrying conservative, a right-wing pundit," even a "libertarian," but who voted for Bill Clinton and has hardly been known to call for tax cuts or the restoration of constitutional government, thinks it was the Republican Convention in Houston that did Bush in. "Family values," y'know. Scary stuff like that. In Bryant-Gumbel-speak, the word "Christian" has become synonymous with "extreme," and Safire apparently shares this view. Or has he merely grown? Anyway, he wins this year's Kevin Phillips Award for Impersonating a Conservative.

The Left saw 1992 as an opportunity to ditch Bush and discredit Reagan at the same time. True, this was also Bill

Mr. Bethell is Washington correspondent for The American Spectator.

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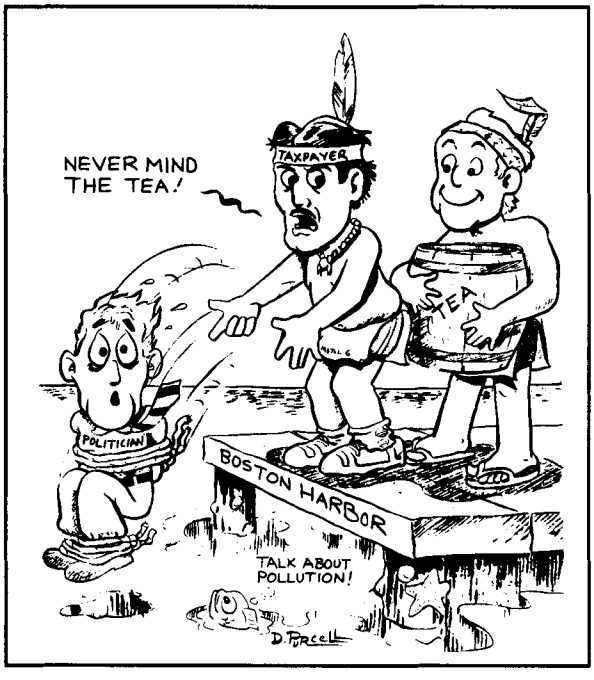

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Clinton's message—let's put an end to "12 years of trickle-down economics." But Clinton didn't pretend to be anything other than a partisan pol. Some journalists were happy to sing along with him all the same. According to *Washington Post* columnist Richard Cohen, Bush not only called Reagan's economic program "voodoo economics" but as President adopted Reagan's program "in toto." (If that had been so, of course, the principal strategist of Bush's failed economic policies, Dick Darman, would have been a target of the *Washington Post* rather than a favored source.)

Writing in *The New Republic*, also before the election, former National Endowment of the Arts chairman John Frohnmayer frothed in his by-

I SEE THE WHITE HOUSE AND CONGRESS CONTROLLED BY THE DEMOCRATS... I ALSO SEE DOUBLE DIGIT INFLATION AND INTEREST RATES AND LOTS OF FOREIGN POLICY SCREW-UPS...
I WANTED YOU TO TELL ME THE FUTURE, NOT PAST!
WRIGHT PROVIDENCE JOURNAL-BULLETIN
I AM

now familiar style at the Right's "headlock" on the GOP, and vowed to vote for Clinton. In addition to philistinism, Frohnmayer was upset about a new horror lurking in the GOP platform—the desire to teach "right from wrong." And another thing: the GOP platform defended private property. (Really, where did Bush find this guy? And how long before People for the American Way gives him a top job?)

The attempt to mislead us about Bush's defeat will make little difference, of course. It's just too implausible. And the good news is that the GOP has now been decapitated. The very people to whom the message, "steer clear of the Right," has been so effectively addressed in recent years—liberal Republicans—are now on their way out of Washington. Out of the loop at long last, and this time really out of it. Goodbye Baker, Darman, Skinner, Teeter, Malek, Mosbacher, nonpartisan implementers of policies dreamed up by Democrats: Begone!

In the famous "struggle for the soul of the GOP" that does indeed lie ahead, these people will wield little influence. The struggle will also take place beyond the realm of media influence. Journalists will soon enough have their hands full trying to keep Bill Clinton on track.

Media comment often falls into the little-noted category, "Now They Tell Us." Here is the *New York Times*'s Maureen Dowd on the day after the election: George Bush lost because he grew complacent, "freezing out old friends and advisors who long ago tried to sound the alarm, and surrounding himself with politically tone-deaf economic advisors who were reviled by the conservatives who helped elect the President." A big change here from the admiring Darman profile Miss Dowd wrote a few weeks earlier. (Now you tell us.) And here's David Broder, post-election: "[Bush] was not helped by those to whom he entrusted domestic decision-making . . . The team of Nick Brady and Dick Darman reinforced Bush's fatal inclination to let the recession cure itself."

Now they tell us.

Here are a few more intriguing items—media truth-telling that point to the shoals ahead for the President-elect. On the eve of the election, the *Washington Post* complained editorially that, despite rhetoric to the contrary, the politics of the last 12 years has been "dead set against" any serious spending cuts. In October, David Broder made the amazing-but-true observation that 1992 is "year 12 of the Great Splurge, the era of rampant, runaway, ruinous federal spending." E. J. Dionne added that conservatives had said they could convince voters that less government was good for them, but in actual practice they not only failed to deliver, but "never really tried." Again, all too true. From 1982 to 1992, tax revenues grew by 5.8 per cent a year, but spending grew by 6.5 per cent. There were also numerous tax increases in the 12 years—perhaps a dozen or so. The real media complaint is that Republicans (contrary to Bob Dole's perennial advice) have now usurped the traditional Democratic role: they have become the party of, yes . . . tax and spend. This accounts in part for the Beltway's tremendous loathing of Republicans in recent years. The GOP is supposed to act "responsibly," cleaning up after the Democrats, holding the line on spending and raising taxes to eliminate the budget deficit they inherit.

As Beltway pundits now belatedly acknowledge, this didn't happen in the cycle just ended. To give the Beltway Class its due, it did pull off a great coup in 1990 by prevailing on Bush, through the finagling of Budget Director Darman, to renege on his "no new taxes" pledge and revert to type as a tax-raising, pain-and-suffering Republican. This duly drove Bush from office two years later. Beneath the gloating, though, there's great anxiety within the Beltway.

Clinton now inherits a budget deficit the size of the whole federal budget when Jerry Ford was President, and a national debt that as a percentage of GNP is double what it was when Jimmy Carter became President. Clinton has little maneuvering room, in other words. Is he going to raise our taxes? Go ahead, Bill—make our day. Raise taxes on the rich? That will only increase the deficit: the rich have accountants, and money can travel abroad (points that persistently elude *New York Times* and *Washington Post* journalists). Cut spending? It hasn't been done since the end of the Korean War, but we'd like to see someone give it a try; Clinton just might succeed, on

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Nixon-to-China grounds. *Increase* spending in the Keynesian hope that this will prime the pumps? Tempting, but will the press make the option less attractive by continuing to bay at the deficit?

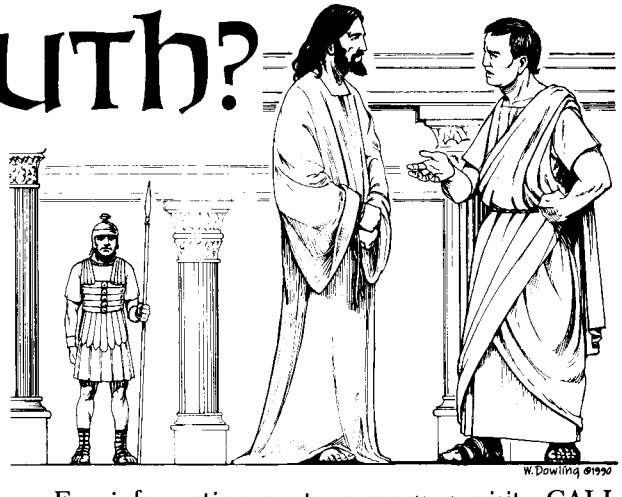
Journalists never used to bother very much about the budget deficit. The suspicion lingers that they made a federal case of it in recent years only to scare easily scared Republicans away from a tax-cutting strategy. The real test of this cynical hypothesis lies dead ahead. Clinton will be tempted to pursue the easy course of added federal spending, perhaps a federal jobs program. But concerted media hooting would probably scare him off. What "policy" will the National Press Building adopt? Will the medicine prescribed for Republicans also be recommended for their undoubted darling, Bill Clinton?

The early signs are that the press indeed takes itself seriously as the custodians of our children's future (mortgaged, you'll recall). On the day after the election the bellwether journalist Albert Hunt, Washington bureau chief of the *Wall Street Journal*, warned that if Clinton "avoids tougher measures like a credible deficit-reduction measure, it'll be a colossal mistake." *Time* proclaimed on its cover that the victorious Clinton has a "Mandate for Change," but change in which direction? "He will have to be honest about uncomfortable truths and brave in making tough choices," the editors grimly advise. Assistant managing editor Walter Isaacson, adumbrator of the conventional wisdom on Grub Street, says that Clinton will have to learn the art of "displeasing people." Beltway chronicler Elizabeth Drew discerned that Clinton "probably will have to" go back on his word and raise taxes on the middle class, even though he "will be in for some grief" if he does. (But not from her.) No joy for Bill here.

The press corps these days really does take this pain-and-suffering, root-canal business seriously. Notice Jim Lehrer's question to Clinton in the third debate: "Governor, the word 'pain'—one of the other leadership things that's put on you is that you don't speak of pain . . . nobody's really going to have to suffer under your plan." Among the least partisan of journalists, Lehrer obviously considered it uncontroversial to be calling for Clinton to impose pain and suffering on the electorate.

Maybe, then, we are about to see a complete role reversal, with the Clinton Administration embracing the traditional Republican role: tax collectors for the welfare state. Clinton is obviously a very astute politician, so it will be interesting to see how he handles this. If he accepts the prescribed root-canal treatment, he could easily be a one-term President. If not, the media will be unhappy with him (if early indicators are reliable). Either way, the good news for conservatives is that Democrats are finally going to have to take responsibility for Democratic policies. For at least the last four years Republicans have obediently enacted the Democrats' agenda. And they took responsibility for those policies. Now it's the Democrats' turn, not merely to set policy, but to take the blame for it. □

WHAT IS TRUTH?



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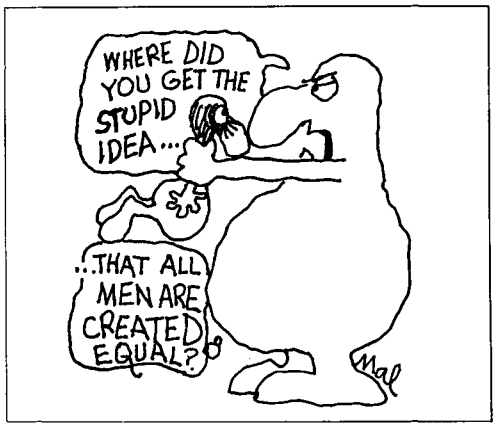

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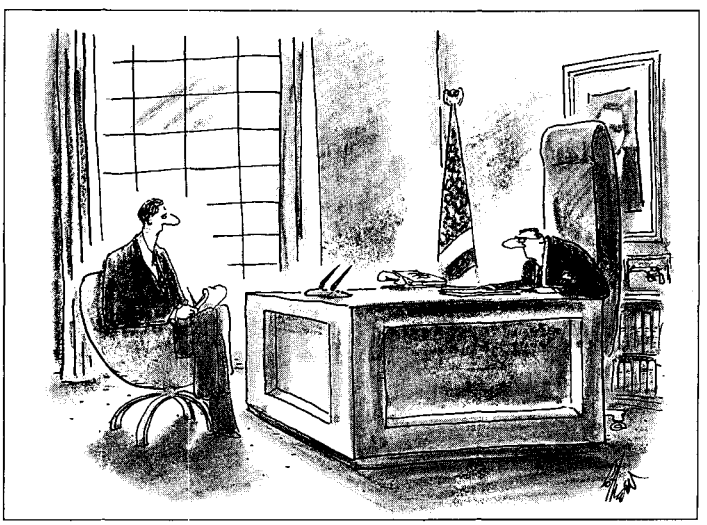

"Of course I'm a crook—my constituents are crooks!"

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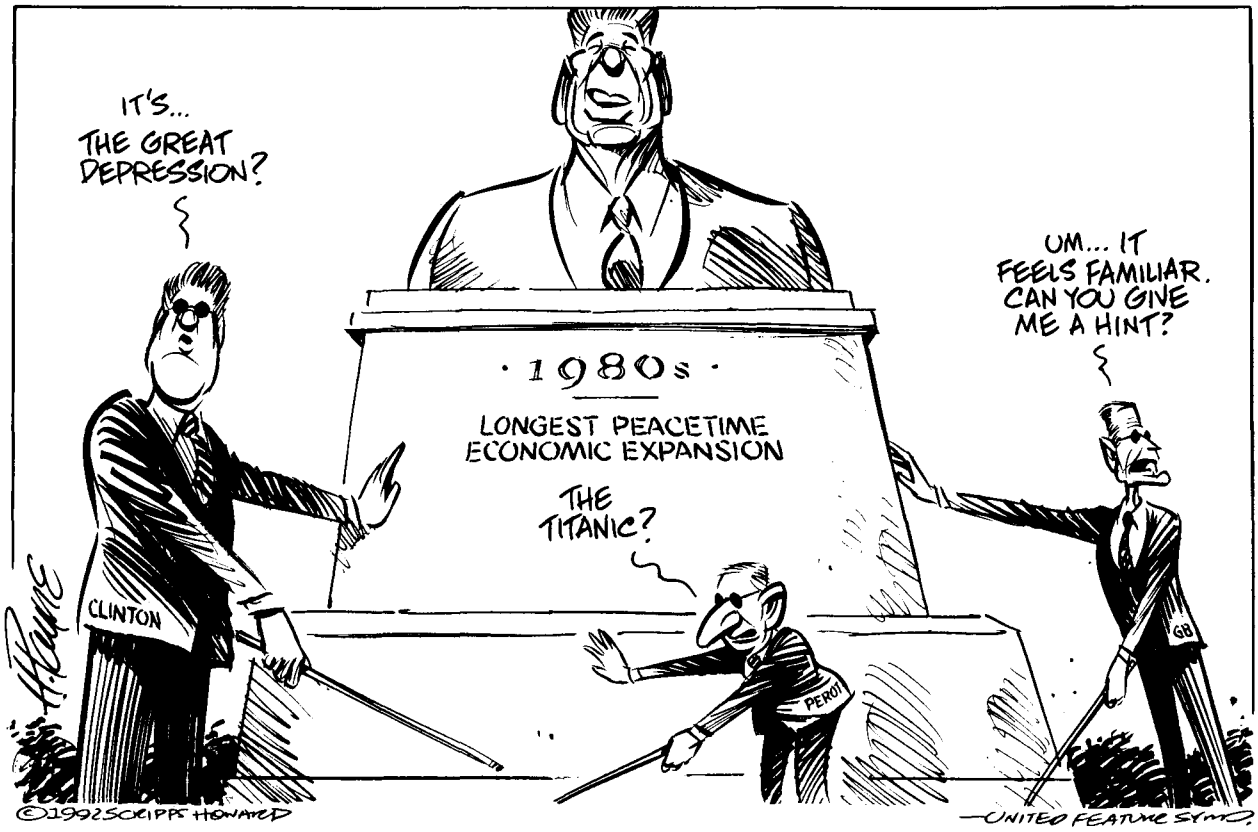

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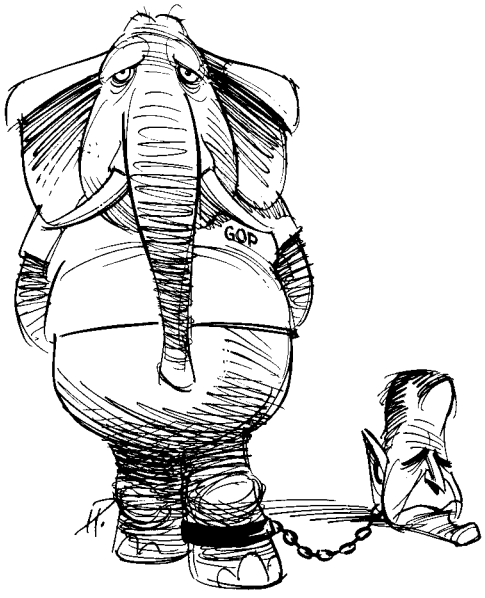

The Unmaking of a President

WHY BUSH LOST

George Bush never realized that he won as Reagan's heir in 1988, and so he spent the next four years dismantling the Reagan coalition. The result will be inaugurated January 20.

JOHN O'SULLIVAN

ONE YEAR AGO, a group of leading conservative Republicans—including William Bennett; Vin Weber, who subsequently became co-chairman of the Bush campaign; Pete du Pont; and Bill Kristol, chief of staff to Vice President Quayle—met in Washington to discuss the approaching election. Although most politicians (most leading Democrats very much included) still assumed the inevitability of President Bush's re-election, these professionals were much less sanguine. The economy was entering the second trough of its double-dip recession; there was strong disaffection on the Right provoked by the President's directionless pragmatism; Pat Buchanan was threatening to enter the New Hampshire primary; and there was a restless, unhappy, pessimistic mood across the land. Yet the White House was oblivious not only to these less tangible threats, but even to Mr. Bush's alarming slide in the opinion polls.

"The President's approval rating has been halved in three months," said Ed Rollins, Reagan's 1984 campaign manager, who later served briefly in the Perot campaign. "It hasn't stopped falling yet. It will hit the low thirties by New Hampshire—*unless the President signifies concern that the country is hurting and proposes to do something dramatic about it.*"

Mr. O'Sullivan is NR*'s Editor.*

Something dramatic was indeed proposed after this meeting. HUD Secretary Jack Kemp and Vice President Quayle fought strenuously in the White House to persuade the President to announce an anti-recessionary "growth package" of tax cuts betweeen Thanksgiving and Christmas. Their logic, like that of Ed Rollins, was that it would be easier to stop the slide right away than to regain the lost ground months later. But the President preferred the views of Budget Director Richard Darman and Treasury Secretary Nicholas Brady—guardians of liberal Republican orthodoxy and, not coincidentally, of the 1990 tax-raising budget compromise—who advised waiting for the State of the Union address in January to unveil new policies. By then, however, the President was struggling against Pat Buchanan in New Hampshire and had, as Mr. Rollins predicted, fallen to the low thirties in the polls where, give or take a few brief surges, he remained to the end.

Mr. Bush's Deconstruction

IN RETROSPECT, this White House battle was the turning point in Mr. Bush's Presidency. It marked the final deconstruction of his political identity as Reagan's heir.

When Ronald Reagan retired four years ago, he left behind a conservative coalition that was politically dominant and a liberal opposition confined in a fiscal straitjacket. Indeed, these two conditions were mutually reinforcing. Mr. Reagan's coalition was ideologically diverse, but he offered something to everyone in it. Blue-collar Reagan Democrats had opposition to racial and sexual quotas; foreign-policy conservatives had the firm prosecution of the cold war; the Religious right had "family values" and a pro-life position on abortion; and economic conservatives had deregulation. And *all* of these groups were united by their opposition to higher taxes.

The result was that by 1989 some 40 per cent of Americans described themselves as moderates, 38 per cent as conservatives, and only 18 per cent as liberals. Voters under the age of 35 identified with the Republicans by margins of between 3 and 12 per cent over the Democrats, who were concentrated among older voters. And there was the "other gender gap": men voted for Mr. Bush in 1988 by 58 to 42 per cent, and white men voted for him by 67 to 33 per cent.

Moreover, liberal Democrats were unable to break up this conservative coalition by their usual methods of tax, spend, and elect because Reagan had left behind three fiscal mechanisms to hobble them. The elimination of "indexing" in 1981 had deprived the Federal Government of automatic increases in tax revenue due to inflation.

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The Gramm–Rudman deficit-reduction law automatically imposed spending cuts if Congress failed to enact them. And President Reagan credibly threatened to veto any legislated tax hikes. Contrary to the media myth of Reagan's fiscal recklessness, these arrangements put the U.S. federal deficit on a declining path (at 3 per cent of GNP in 1988) and cut the annual rate of spending growth from an average 11 per cent in the decade 1975–85 to an average 4 per cent in the period 1985–89. It became all but impossible for the Democrats to buy votes with spending programs.

Acting almost like a Democratic "mole" in a Republican White House, Mr. Bush set out systematically to destroy a Reagan coalition that was already missing the fortifying unity provided by the Communist threat. He outraged economic conservatives by embarking on a vast re-regulation of the U.S. economy in banking, finance, transport, and the environment, and by allowing spending to rise more than any President since John F. Kennedy. He disturbed those conservatives who thought that the purposes of U.S. foreign policy should include encouraging either democracy or nationhood by upholding a brutal and unstable status quo in, successively, Iraq, the Soviet Union, and Yugoslavia, and by describing the dismal results as a New World Order. He signed the civil-rights bill, which he had previously denounced as a "quota bill," abandoning his political appeal to working-class Reagan Democrats, who in the midst of a recession had no economic reason to support him. He unsettled the Religious Right by taking both sides in the controversy over federal subsidies to obscene art. Above all, he agreed to raise taxes in the 1990 budget compromise.

That proved a disaster, removing effective restraints on spending and doubling the deficit in a year. Its political effect was to replace a Republican question ("Do you want a tax hike?") with a Democratic one ("What kind of tax hike do you want—one designed merely to raise revenue or one designed to achieve fairness?"). And it removed the patrician President's one major claim to be a populist opponent of the permanent government in Washington. Overnight, he became One of Them against Us.

Identity Crisis

WHEN Kemp and Quayle came to President Bush in November 1991 with their proposals for a "growth package," they

Echo Politics

A FEW days before the election I joined my eight-year-old Cub Scout at a slide show on bats and was struck with the similarity between George Bush's policy formulation and how a bat stalks prey—echo location. Bats fly blind in the night, locating dinner by sending out a signal that bounces back. When it came to policy, Mr. Bush was blind as a bat and able to position himself only when signals bounced back from Hill Democrats, the elite media, or pollsters. (Maybe this is what he was trying to express when he confessed his problem with "the vision thing.")

In highlighting the serious policy mistakes that were made, conservatives are not engaging in 20/20 hindsight. Across the spectrum of domestic issues, while the White House was stumbling around in the dark, there was a winning conservative initiative being ignored.

In the spring of 1990, Bush hosted a series of meetings with supporters and opponents of the Kennedy-sponsored Civil Rights Act of 1990, to explore how much room there was to compromise on the bill's quotas. The meetings were stacked with traditional "civil rights" leaders, who urged the President to sign the bill. Conservatives had been urging the White House to give prominence to alternative voices within the black community who opposed the standard set-asides and quotas and endorsed an alternative economic empowerment strategy. At one of the meetings, Robert Woodson, president of the National Center for Neighborhood Enterprise, categorized the pending civil-rights legislation as irrelevant to the plight of poor blacks. Mark Liedl, director of the Heritage Foundation's New Majority Project, told the President that there was "a growing sentiment for a new direction in civil rights," and argued that the agenda ought to be expansion of economic opportunities for the poor, not quotas for middle-class minorities.

Despite interest on the part of Boyden Gray and a few others in the White House, the President elected to keep the civil-rights debate focussed on job quotas. He vetoed the first version of the Kennedy bill, the quota debate dragged on for a year and a half, and the Civil Rights Act of 1991 was ultimately signed—quotas and all. The opportunity to advance a civil-rights strategy based on school choice, tenant management of public housing, enterprise zones, regulatory emancipation, and crime control was lost.

A pro-family tax agenda was laid out by the Family Research Council in a series of memos to the White House in the autumn of 1990. The memos specifically warned that if Mr. Bush did not take the initiative on family tax relief "the issue will be stolen by the President's opponents." The moderate Democrats at the Progressive Policy Institute had joined conservatives in proposing such tax relief, and a real opportunity to pass it existed. The White House expressed no interest.

Early in 1991 Republican Representative Frank Wolf of Virginia took up the cause and introduced legislation to raise the personal exemption to $3,500. The proposal was intentionally modest in scope in order to win White House support. Mr. Wolf tirelessly lobbied the White House—to no avail. His bill ultimately enjoyed the support of a large majority of his colleagues, including 111 Democrats, but was never endorsed by the White House.

When confronted with the Family and Medical Leave Act in the name of helping families, Mr. Bush could point to no alternative and was bludgeoned late in the campaign by

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were offering him a last chance to restore his political identity along Reaganite lines. And when he refused, he set himself the existential task of creating a new and more authentic identity.

But how? Mr. Bush could not easily find that personality within himself. He has been a political schizophrenic since he first entered Texas politics —an "other-directed man" in a ten-gallon hat, a moderate Republican who supported Goldwater in 1964, a Connecticut Yankee at the court of King Ronnie. Does he know what he really believes? Is there a there there?

Nor was it much easier to assemble a new identity cynically by appealing to the ideas and prejudices of the voters. His record in government was an obstacle in almost every area. His flip-flop on taxes had alienated conservatives, who demanded an apology before they would listen to him again. (It took him until Super Tuesday to issue a graceless expression of cynical regret, and until the Convention to manage something that still blamed the Democrats for his apostasy—and that was too late.) As for the voters generally, waking up after the cold-war victory to find a recession blighting the land, they were resentful, pessimistic, mystified and thus inclined to blame their troubles on betrayal by various elites on both the Right (the rich, Wall Street) and the Left (the "cultural elite," Hollywood). Politicians as various as Pat Buchanan and Jerry Brown were able to exploit such resentments. But in the primaries, at the Convention, and in the campaign until the final fortnight, Mr. Bush seemed both aloof and as mystified as the voters.

Underneath these superficial currents, however, a deeply felt national mood was not hard to discern: the public wanted someone who was not Mr. Bush but not a dangerous liberal either. Governor Clinton himself realized this and crafted a campaign stressing welfare reform, the death penalty, and a "middle class" tax cut. But the public remained suspicious. Hence the rise of Ross Perot, who was less like Mr. Bush and less like a liberal than anyone else in the United States.

Unfortunately, he was also sinister, paranoid, and impulsive. Hence he served mainly as transmission belt, taking votes from a floundering Mr. Bush when he entered the race, transferring them to Mr. Clinton (then surging at the Democratic Convention) when he left it, regaining some support on *re*-entering, and finally giving both candidates the chance to win

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a bill with no grassroots support, but great symbolism.

On the education front, when Lamar Alexander was nominated to be Secretary of Education, he held a series of meetings with conservatives where he was consistently told that parental choice was the only issue that clearly defined the President as a reformer and put the Democrats on the defensive.

Paul Weyrich, William Bennett, Pete du Pont, and Gary Bauer reiterated the central importance of choice to Alexander just before the President's reform package was unveiled. In response to this conservative pressure, Alexander beefed up his rhetoric on choice, but kept the choice initiative buried in the jumble of the package. And notwithstanding his rhetorical commitment to radical reform, Alexander struck a deal with Senator Kennedy to drop choice in exchange for his other proposals. The struggle for a reform package lasted until this fall, when the Democrats denied Mr. Alexander even a consensus bill in a partisan attempt to force the Education President to veto education reform during the campaign—a scenario conservatives had been warning about for over a year.

On the values front, the public outcry over NEA-funded obscenity and sacrilege provided George Bush with a golden opportunity to force liberals, and ultimately Bill Clinton, to defend Andres Serrano and Robert Mapplethorpe. Instead Mr. Bush wound up supporting NEA chief John Frohnmayer until Pat Buchanan's attacks during the primary campaign forced his ouster.

A year after the Senate approved Jesse Helms's restrictions on the use of NEA funds, Mr. Bush declared at a press conference, "I don't know of anybody in the government or a government agency that should be set up to censor what you write or what you paint, or how you express yourselves." This statement put Mr. Bush squarely in the camp of those who refuse to see the difference between censorship and refusal to subsidize. The media reported that "defenders of artistic expression picked up a strong supporter."

In September of 1991, another Helms amendment applying the FCC standard of public decency to the NEA passed the Senate 68 to 28, still without White House backing, and Helms's office remains convinced that had Bush taken up the fight, a similar vote could have been forced in the House, and the NEA would today be out of the obscenity and sacrilege business. In October, John Frohnmayer endorsed Bill Clinton.

Imagine if, in the wake of the L.A. riots, Mr. Bush had been inoculated against charges of having ignored the plight of troubled inner cities by his championship of an aggressive urban-policy agenda. At a White House meeting in October 1989, Stuart Butler of the Heritage Foundation amplified on a memo he had written to White House staff, outlining policies aimed at attacking the root causes of poverty in the inner cities through empowerment, economic revitalization, and real welfare reform. Recognizing the policy inertia even nine months into the Bush Administration, Butler recalls telling an offended presidential aide, "Since it is the Bush Administration, maybe we should call it the 'Skirmish on Poverty.'"

Had George Bush and his senior advisors seen fit to adopt these conservative policies and strategies, the presidential debates would have been a forum for Bill Clinton to explain his opposition to economic empowerment of the poor, full parental choice in education, tax relief for the beleaguered American family, and meaningful welfare reform. There was no need to fly blind.

—KATE WALSH O'BEIRNE

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over his supporters when he blew himself up on prime time by alleging dark plots by the Bush campaign to disrupt his daughter's wedding.

But by then, Mr. Bush, having failed to define himself, had been defined by his opponents and the media. He was, they said, the desperate general of "the Incompatibles," a shrinking army of wealthy, self-indulgent, essentially liberal, country-club Republicans allied to resentful, lower-middle-class, fundamentalist Christians. The germ of truth in this was that since Mr. Bush had driven away other Reaganite conservatives, these two groups stood out.

But a greater problem was that Mr. Bush had simply never contested the long-range liberal shaping of public opinion through the media which ultimately sets the terms of political debate. Moderate Republicanism, which animates (if that is the term) Mr. Bush and his closest friends, has a narrow definition of what constitutes a political issue. It does not concern itself with battles over remote and theoretical matters such as supply-side economics. Yet as Clinton's chief pollster, Stan Greenberg, argued two years ago: "To challenge the conservative hegemony, Democrats need to define the Reagan–Bush years—to create an imagery of Reagan–Bush America that . . . impeaches the credibility of conservative governance for middle America." Because the Bush Administration never challenged the media's view of the Eighties as a Decade of Greed (indeed, his aides endorsed it), Mr. Bush fought as the representative of a failed economic era.

This failure to shape the political environment hobbled the Bush Republicans everywhere. Because they never challenged the media depiction of the Republican Convention as a fiesta of "hate" that "alienated" America (in fact, the Convention produced a bounce in the polls of between 9 and 15 points), Mr. Bush came to be seen as in thrall to outside-the-mainstream fundamentalists. Because they never contested the media's definition of "family values" as exclusionary and thus bigoted (against gays, single mothers, etc.), he abandoned a potentially popular theme and ended up looking shamefaced into the bargain. Because they systematically denied themselves arguments from principle, he could only resort to negative attacks against which Mr. Clinton had protected himself in advance by shouting not "Wolf" but "Willie Horton."

Because they never fought in the first ditch, Mr. Bush was defeated in the last. □

The Bush–Baker Team

THEY'D RATHER BE HUNTING

Campaign wizard James Baker turned out to be his chief's never-present help in time of trouble.

PAUL BEDARD

IT'S AUGUST 21, the day after the Republican Convention, and President Bush is about to step onto the stage at a campaign rally in steamy Gulfport, Mississippi, when a television producer spots chief of staff Samuel Skinner moping around the press area. Ousted to make room for Bush's hunting buddy James A. Baker III, he is told that the President received a mighty Convention bounce and is within two points of Governor Clinton in the network's polls.

"You know what?" said Skinner, according to a scribe who witnessed the talk. "What that means is that Baker came in a week late. Now the election is his to lose."

That was as close as the leader of the free world ever came to the Ozark daredevil in the polls, and plenty of Washington fingers are pointed accusingly at Baker. "Baker and his team were arrogantly clueless," said an angry Administration official who has joined hundreds of colleagues in the parade to Panic Press, a résumé shop two blocks from the White House.

Teamed again to repeat their 1988 election victory, this time based on their smashing success in crushing Communism and driving Saddam Hussein's troops from Kuwait, Bush and Baker were outsmarted by a couple of slick, Southern yuppies who con-

Mr. Bedard is White House correspondent for the Washington Times.

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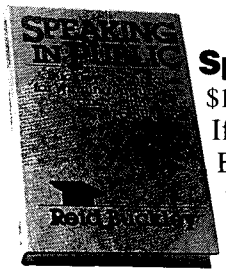

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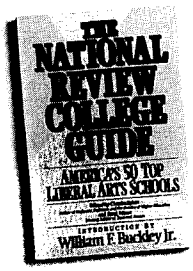

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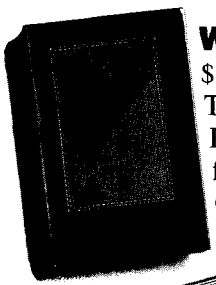

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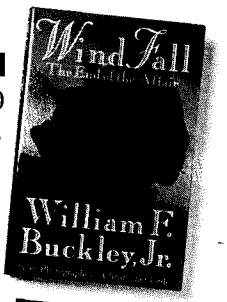

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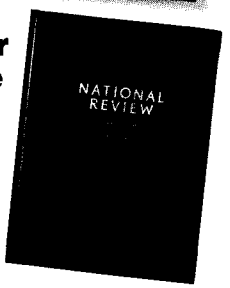

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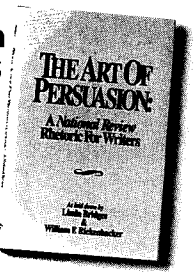

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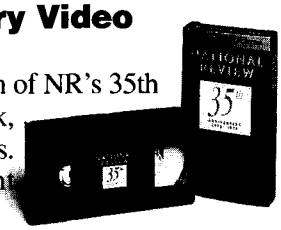

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vinced the nation it was time to throw the old fogies out. How could the Bush–Quayle campaign be beaten by Clinton, the candidate they most wanted to face?

Simply put, Baker showed up minus his Midas Touch. He may have come too late in any case to revive the campaign for Bush, who had resisted every plea to hit the campaign trail. And he didn't really want to be there. "The last thing he wanted to see was his picture next to James Carville on the cover of *Time*. He wanted to be remembered as the secretary of state who ended the cold war, got Saddam, and expanded democracy, not just some handler," said a White House official.

When Baker arrived with his team, it quickly became clear that he wanted only to handle the big decisions, such as preparing major Bush speeches and scheduling the debates. Baker essentially went into seclusion, as he struggled to untangle the mess he had walked into. Meanwhile his deputy Robert Zoellick took over the day-to-day operations of the White House, Dennis Ross handled the policy shop, and Margaret Tutwiler tried to figure out just why the Administration's communications network had failed for three years.

If the past was prologue, Baker should have shone. But his two biggests tasks—giving his chief an economic message and getting a favorable debate format—were completed with only mixed success.

While Mr. Bush delivered a strong economic speech in September at the Detroit Economic Club, spelling out a conservative "Agenda for American Renewal," he seemed to forget almost immediately what he said there, shifting instead to a strategy heavy on attacks. As for the debates, by dickering over formats for weeks, Baker left the polls stuck in neutral as voters waited for the clashes to take place. "We lost valuable time. Baker blew it," said a campaign official.

When the debates finally came, it was Bush's turn to blow it. After he gave two lackluster performances, Dan Quayle skipped by Baker and invaded the Oval Office to lay it on the line to Bush. Stand up and fight or lose, he warned.

Baker even lost his magic touch with the media, the asset that had helped create his image as one of the greatest secretaries of state in the nation's history. Instead, the media ganged up to thwart his campaign strategies, and the campaign let them do it. In the end, the campaign was left distributing bumperstickers and caps reading, "Annoy the Media—Reelect Bush."

Campaign without a Theme

WHILE the Democrats built their campaign on a message of change, the Republicans lacked any theme or even a campaign slogan other than "Four more years." Only rarely did top aides discuss the need for a theme or slogan, even in the final weeks when the Clinton campaign was turning up the heat on Bush for failing to present a vision for a second term. Nothing came forward because the Administration for three years had operated without ideology or philosophy, choosing instead to manage the status quo.

Americans in the end picked the guy with the vision, even though half disagreed with that vision—especially Clinton's plans to increase bureaucracy and taxes. "The first thing to decide is who you are, and they never did that," said former Reagan and Bush Administration official William Bennett. "It's hard to comunicate if you've got nothing to communicate."

No one was more frustrated than Dan Quayle. Seeing no direction coming from the West Wing or from campaign chairman Robert Teeter or campaign manager Fred Malek, Quayle took the role of 1988 campaign strategist Lee Atwater. While Bush sat in the Oval Office, Quayle pushed a reform agenda, targeting the legal system, welfare, and finally health care.

"We gave the campaign its only issues, but nobody followed them up," said a Quayle aide. When Quayle made headlines by attacking *Murphy Brown* and the Hollywood/media elite, Baker, shockingly, ordered him to drop the issue. Baker felt it was winning more press attention than the President's weak and belated attempt to fix the economy.

That was enough for Quayle, who had pushed for the return of Baker even though, as manager of the 1988 campaign, he had treated Quayle shabbily. Quayle just hit the campaign trail on his own, picking his venues and his agenda. Time after time Quayle delivered single-issue speeches that won wide national coverage, unlike the tiresome list speeches Bush delivered.

Along the way, Quayle saw that key conservative groups were being ignored by Baker and the campaign. So he took it upon himself to woo conservatives still angry with Bush's reneging on his tax pledge and evangelicals who were jumping ship because the Clinton–Gore campaign had done a better job selling their men as Christians. Thanks to Quayle alone, many evangelicals on the Sunday before the election distributed campaign packets supporting Bush.

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Meanwhile, back at Bush–Quayle headquarters, Teeter and Malek were in over their heads. Teeter the pollster and Malek the likable businessman never had the influence to penetrate the Oval Office and demand that Bush start campaigning. Republican sources said that the duo had tried to get Bush to oust Budget Director Richard Darman and Treasury Secretary Nicholas Brady, but failed. Nor did they succeed in getting Brady and Darman to wake up and produce a new post-cold-war economic plan.

Into October, state and county Republican chairmen were complaining that they hadn't heard from the Bush–Quayle campaign and were giving up the effort for dead. South Carolina Republican Governor Carroll Campbell, for example, said the party had gotten too fat during its days in power and had forgotten the importance of keeping the party base strong.

The Spoiler

THAT EROSION of the GOP base led to a desperate Electoral College vote strategy that had Baker writing off California, New York, and New England and depending on just enough states to carry the President over the 270 mark. But Ross Perot ruined that scheme. In many states, Bush came close to Clinton and would have won had he done a better job of wooing Perot's volunteer army. That was a joint failure by Baker and Bush dating back to when Perot initially pulled out of the race on the last day of the Democratic Convention. Recall that Bush was fishing on Baker's Wyoming ranch and had to be pushed by campaign aides to leave a trout stream and go before TV cameras to ask for the support of Perot's volunteers.

Even on key issues, such as attacking Clinton's management of Arkansas, the campaign fumbled. That's all the more surprising when one considers that the re-election campaign had been praying last February that Clinton would win the Democratic nomination. Mary Matalin would salivate at the thought of comparing Arkansas to the "Massachusetts Miracle." But when it came time to roll out the attacks, Teeter made brief mention at a jammed press conference and then went on to other topics.

When in doubt, why not run on your record? Bush aides said polls showed Americans didn't care any longer about the President's role in crushing Communism, his leadership in the Gulf War, or even his roots in the Reagan Administration. "Those kinds of things became irrelevant to people around the nation when they began to blame us for screwing up the ecnomy," said a Bush advisor.

Who would believe polls discrediting Reagan? The Bush White House did. Indeed, they started trying to rub out memories of the Reagan Revolution the day they took power. Bush only campaigned once with the Gipper after the Republican Convention. Why? "The Bushies didn't believe in him or his revolution. At the end, they thought Carter was more popular," said a White House official.

Bush seemed the absent player in this mess. He didn't want to campaign, but realized in the end that he had to to keep his job. "The campaign was George Bush's to win or lose," said Gary Bauer, a former Reagan Administration official who now heads the Family Research Council. "The President is a big boy."

With that as a backdrop, and the economy in the tank, defeat "was preordained," said Malek. "The outcome of this election was decided before Baker arrived on the scene."

It's now October 26. Skinner is long gone and Baker is hanging around the Melody bar at the Billings, Montana, Holiday Inn. Reporters for weeks had kept a "Baker watch" going because he had remained so elusive. Now he was in public and sipping a drink. Confident the campaign was coming on strong, Baker predicted success. "You've got to know that's the truth because it's well known I never associate myself with losers," one of his barmates recalls Baker saying. Eight days later, when a defeated Bush returned to a tearful welcome staged by all the White House staffers, Baker was missing in action. He had skipped out the day before to go bird hunting in Texas. □

Toppled by Tax Reform

ECONOMIC DOMINOES

The seeds of Bush's defeat were sown under Reagan—but not in the way the media think.

PAUL CRAIG ROBERTS

MANY factors contributed to George Bush's defeat, but polls report that the economy played the biggest role. In the end, the Bush Presidency was destroyed by economic dominoes toppled by the Tax Reform Act of 1986. Ironically, this disastrous legislation was the work of Bush advisors James A. Baker III and Richard Darman, who were running the Treasury Department at that time.

As experts such as George Washington University professor John W. Kendrick have concluded, the 1986 Act raised the cost of capital, thus reducing productivity growth and taking out a lot of the juice that Reagan had put in the economy. Its biggest effect, however, was in destroying a tremendous amount of real-estate wealth, thereby collapsing savings & loan associations and commercial banks.

The legislation greatly lengthened the depreciation period for commercial real estate. The longer payback period substantially reduced the values of properties. Simultaneously, the act took away the normal tax deductions from most real-estate investors, resulting in negative cash flow, which caused investors to walk away from

Mr. Roberts, who was assistant secretary of the Treasury for economic policy in 1981–82, currently holds the William E. Simon chair at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

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their investments. A third blow was the 40 per cent hike in the capital-gains tax rate. This made it certain that no investor would hold on for the long haul.

The gratuitous destruction of $1 trillion or more in wealth was a political fiasco in itself. However, the Bush Administration greatly magnified the destructive effects with the 1989 S&L act, which destroyed the value of thrift charters. With the deposit-insurance fund exhausted, the cost of bailing out the depositors was shifted to taxpayers. Fearful of what their stupidity had wrought, the policymakers hid behind allegations of private real-estate fraud, and this is when Mr. Bush's political troubles began in earnest.

In towns and cities all over the country, it had been a mark of local prominence to serve on the board of the bank or S&L. Now these business people, doctors, and lawyers—the backbone of the Republican Party—are being ruined by government suits alleging breach of fiduciary duty for approving real-estate loans that later declined in value because of the 1986 Tax Reform Act!

It is not the fault of these board members that federal legislation thoughtlessly destroyed the value of real-estate projects that their institutions had financed. But the Federal Government could not care less. The Resolution Trust Corporation and the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation have set in motion a powerful mechanism for a total miscarriage of justice. They have hired private law firms that bill by the hour to try to recover from thrift and commercial-bank executives and board members, and from their accountants, legal advisors, and insurance companies, as much of the cost of the deposit-insurance bailout as possible—regardless of any real malfeasance.

The lawyers, thus, have an incentive to sue anyone ever connected with a failed financial institution. As Gretchen Morgenson shows in the September 28 issue of *Forbes*, the government's lawsuits are terrorizing innocent people. In one instance, an allegedly negligent director had been comatose in a hospital bed at the time the allegedly negligent loan was approved. In another instance, the estate of a dead man is being sued—thereby disrupting the education of his children—because of real-estate evaluations that were perfectly sound before the 1986 Act. The RTC makes the incredible claim that 81 per cent of S&L

Some Domestic Lowlights of the Bush Administration

CONSERVATIVES woke up on the morning of November 4, 1992, not to a "mandate" or a "landslide," for Plurality Bill got only 43 per cent of the vote. But reality doesn't matter in Washington, D.C. The Democratic Congress will pass the Clinton agenda, and much of the fault will lie with George Bush. Rather than dismantle or even hold steady the machinery of big government, he vastly expanded it. Whenever a pressure group raised its voice, liberty and property rights were deemed expendable.

For example, Bush gave us the Americans with Disabilities Act, ordering employers to pretend we're all physically and mentally equal, and to spend to make it so. A small, money-losing company may have to widen its corridors, install elevators, and redo its bathrooms. Another firm can be forced to hire a blind lawyer, and a second employee to read to him. Discrimination against those who have trouble learning, reasoning, and remembering is now illegal, as is discrimination against former (and "former") crack addicts.

Another bill George Bush signed—the Civil Rights Act of 1991—is the quota bill he claimed it wasn't. Companies now have to make their workforces at all levels "representative of the community," or prove to the EEOC that they aren't racist. No hiring standard with a racially "disparate impact" can be used, from screening out ex-cons to requiring a high-school diploma.

Should mugging someone because he's Cambodian be a more serious crime than mugging him because he has a gold watch? No, according to our entire Anglo-Saxon legal tradition. But, thanks to the Bush Administration's "hate crimes" legislation, it now is.

Mr. Bush also took the side of speeding drunk and felon Rodney King over the policemen who had to arrest him. Before he had time to learn the facts, Mr. Bush claimed on national television to be "sickened," thereby injecting himself into a matter properly left to the jury.

When the jury made its correct decision, Bush ordered the Justice Department to bring the four impoverished LAPD cops up on double-jeopardy civil-rights charges (as the criminal King prepared to collect a million dollars from the taxpayers of Los Angeles). Liberal reporters at the *American Lawyer*, who watched the whole trial on Court TV, agreed with the jury, but by then the damage had been done.

When South Central Angelenos started their spree of murder, mugging, looting, and burning, Mr. Bush waffled. In one speech, he called for law and order; in another, he implied that lack of welfare was to blame. But not to worry, he would speed along more "aid to the cities." When Mr. Bush was politically forced to deploy federal troops, he did not empower them to protect property; that was left to armed residents.

After the riots, Bush instructed his banking regulators to go easy on bad loans made to minority enterprises. This was consonant with his stepped-up enforcement of the Community Reinvestment Act. The CRA orders banks to meet *de facto* racial quotas in mortgage lending, and President Bush's 1989 S&L bailout bill ordered the Federal Reserve to release an annual study on percentages of loans approved for different groups (but it ignores credit ratings, job histories, assets, and other very relevant factors in loan making). The Fed's finding that blacks and Hispanics get fewer loans than whites is highly publicized, but not its note that Asians get more loans than whites.

Bush's "National Goals for Education" was the most centralist and millenarian plan since John Dewey. The Federal Government is to make sure that "*all children* will start

Mr. Rockwell is president of the Ludwig von Mises Institute in Auburn, Ala.

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failures involved fraud and misdealings. As *Forbes* says, "That simply isn't so." Scarcely any of the 2,100 financial institutions that have been closed would have failed had it not been for the 1986 Act.

The persecution of the private credit system by the FTC and the FDIC—permitted by the Bush Administration—has disrupted local business throughout the country and put the economy on hold. Recently, Alfred J. T. Byrne, general counsel of the FDIC, bragged in the *Wall Street Journal* that "the FDIC's current litigation load numbers some 34,000 cases, and non-litigation items add 10,000 matters to our legal responsibilities." To handle all the work, he has "a staff of 850 attorneys and 1,200 support personnel" together with "more than 1,400 outside law firms." Democrats on the Senate Banking Committee have encouraged the large number of frivolous lawsuits precisely because the targets are Republican business men and women.

Deficit Phobia

THE STUPIDITY of the Bush Administration's approach to the made-in-Washington S&L debacle reflects the Republican establishment's deficit phobia—it blindly destroys its own in pursuing a smaller deficit. Indeed, the real-estate crash that brought down the S&Ls was itself a product of the same deficit phobia. The 1986 Tax Reform Act was constructed on the rotten basis of static revenue estimates, which mistakenly assumed that taking away real-estate "tax preferences" would raise revenues to pay for lower tax rates. Instead, we got a $200- to $500-billion (depending on how it is measured) taxpayer bailout of federal deposit insurance caused by the collapse in real-estate values. It should have been obvious to policymakers that real-estate prices, already under pressure from unexpected disinflation, could not absorb the massive change in tax treatment. And yet the Treasury Department, Congress's Joint Committee on Taxation, and the Congressional Budget Office still employ the people who assumed that they would.

Once the huge costs of the deposit-insurance bailout were in the picture, Budget Director Richard Darman used them to pursue his own agenda. The bailout was a one-time affair of acquiring and disposing of assets, unrelated to the ongoing taxing-and-spending

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school ready to learn"; that "the high-school graduation rate will increase to *at least 90 per cent*"; and that "*every adult American* will be literate and possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy" (emphasis added). Since the central government has constitutional responsibility only for the public schools in Washington, D.C., let's see those shaped up, and then we can think about putting the Department of Education in charge of Alabama and Wyoming.

The labor policies of the Bush Administration were left-liberal across the board—increasing the minimum wage, extending idleness-inducing unemployment benefits, empowering the EEOC—but his crackdown on "child labor" was especially bothersome. At the behest of labor unions, his Labor Secretary set up a sting operation and fined businesses $100,000 for employing 15-year-old kids for more than 3 hours a day or 18 hours a week. What was wrong with work as opposed to hanging around, and why the government rather than parents should be making decisions about what children do with their time, we were never told.

It may be that the Administration just didn't understand the price system. Before the Gulf War, oil prices went up, as they should have, in anticipation of lower supplies. But the White House threatened price controls, and the press secretary complained about "gouging." Oil companies were forced to lower their prices and take a loss.

In the past, consumers and producers determined what went on product labels. But under George Bush's HHS Secretary, Louis Sullivan, more than twenty thousand food items had to have expensive new nutritional labeling.

Several natural disasters took place under Bush (as distinguished from the artificial disaster of his Administration), including Hurricanes Hugo and Andrew. His response was always the same: send in the bureaucrats from the Federal Emergency Management Agency to bungle everything, and spend billions.

There was also the Exxon Valdez oil spill in Prince William Sound. Even though Exxon was the victim, losing billions of dollars, the Bush Administration pursued the company as if the spill were deliberate. Exxon cannot be allowed to get away with an "environmental crime," said Bush's attorney general. But the disaster, though real, was temporary. As with all spills, the oil disappeared, since it is, if you will excuse the expression, natural, organic, and biodegradable.

John Pozsgai is another case in point. An emigrant from Communist Hungary, he bought a former junkyard and cleaned it up, covering it with clean topsoil. Because cattails grew on it, his dry land was "wetlands" to the Feds, and for improving it, he was jailed and fined $200,000. The U.S. Attorney said he wanted to "send a message to the private landowners, corporations, and developers of this country about President Bush's wetlands policy." Pozsgai got the message. "I thought this was a free country," he said.

Finally, Mr. Bush violated a campaign promise and banned importation of most semi-automatic rifles. He also promised to support the Brady bill, which requires a waiting period—similar to the California law that prevented homeowners in Los Angeles from buying guns to protect themselves. The banned rifles are stigmatized as "assault weapons," but the only real assault is on the Second Amendment.

These are far from the only domestic lowlights of the Bush Administration, but John O'Sullivan refused to allow me this entire issue of *NR* for a complete list. They are sufficient, however, to show that the President smoothed the way for Clintonian socialism. Thanks, George, we needed that. —LLEWELLYN H. ROCKWELL JR.

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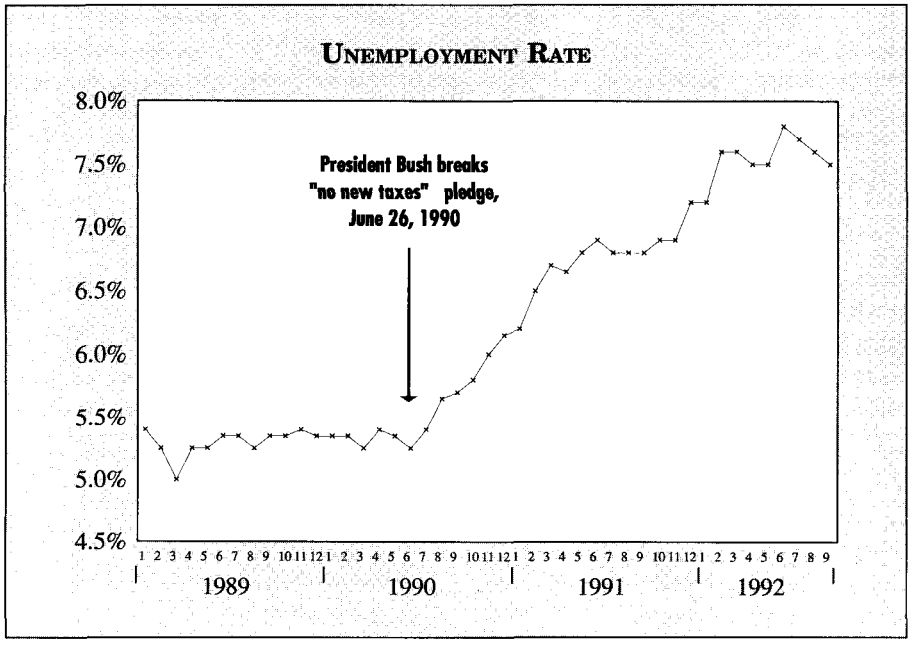
operations of the budget, and conventional accounting practices would have kept the bailout off budget. However, by putting it on budget, Darman gained an additional $300 billion in estimated red ink with which to panic President Bush into breaking his "no new taxes" pledge. This let Darman negotiate the disastrous 1990 budget agreement, a deal in which higher taxes were the price for promised spending cuts and a promised $500-billion reduction in the multi-year deficit forecast.

Predictably, Congress spent the projected revenue increase—but the taxes helped to kill the economy, and the revenues did not materialize. The Congressional Budget Office's latest estimates of federal outlays for 1990–93 are $226 billion higher than its estimates prior to the 1990 budget deal, and federal revenues are $363 billion lower. Consequently, the deficit widened by $589 billion over the four-year period—a swing of $1.089 trillion from the promised reduction. Ironically, interest rates fell despite the massive swelling of the deficit—a big blow to Bush's economic team, which had supported the budget deal on the grounds that the path to lower interest rates was through a lower deficit.



Thus, the failure of the Republican establishment's economic policy and theory is total and complete. It is to be hoped that we will never hear another word from the architects of Bushonomics—who delivered the country to Bill and Hillary Clinton—about how big deficits cause high interest rates. The Bush team doubled the deficit that President Reagan left, and we have the lowest interest rates in three decades, together with an economy that is dead in the water. Jobs, investment, and productivity growth did immeasurably better in Mr. Reagan's high-interest-rate economy. This doesn't prove that high interest rates are the source of economic boom, but it does show that interest rates are not the driving force that the Bush Administration assumed them to be. Michael Boskin and Nicholas Brady put all the eggs in one basket, and it wasn't the right one.

Tax, Spend, Regulate

THE FAILURE of the Bush Administration's macroeconomic policy was compounded by the explosion in regulatory costs and federal outlays. If Americans wanted a tax-spend-and-regulate President for the next four years, they could just as well have re-elected Mr. Bush. Federal regulation prospered under his Administration, gaining control over whole new areas of the economy and private life. The Clean Air Act is vastly inefficient, costing the economy two dollars for every dollar of benefits. The Americans with Disabilities Act has imposed massive costs that make no earthly sense. For example, until recently the underground garage in which I have parked for the past 11 years had one parking space reserved for the handicapped. Never in the 11 years have I observed a car parked in that space. Now, based on an arbitrary formula devised by an unaccountable regulatory bureaucrat, the garage has six permanently empty reserved spaces. At the going price, this is an annual tax on the garage of $14,400. That's just the cost to one garage of one regulation.

George Bush's biggest legislative debacle is the 1991 Civil Rights Act. Worse than a quota bill, the act overturned the 1989 Supreme Court decision that gave white males access to the courts in cases of reverse discrimination. Thus, equality before the law has been breached, and the U.S. now has two separate legal classes: preferred minorities and white males. The ultimate consequences of this development extend far beyond economic and budgetary concerns. At the very least, by turning every hiring and promotion decision into a potential lawsuit, the 1991 Act has greatly raised the costs of employment.

When federal outlays are measured as a ratio of GNP, Mr. Bush's record on government spending looks even worse than it is, because the slow growth in GNP boosts the ratio. Measured in real terms, the compound annual growth rate of federal expenditures under Bush was 3.2 per cent, higher than Reagan's 2.5 per cent or Nixon–Ford's 2.7 per cent, but below Carter's 4.0 per cent and Kennedy–Johnson's 4.8 per cent. If the cost of the deposit-insurance bailout is excluded, Bush's figure drops to 2.6 per cent.

In these comparisons, it is important to note that Reagan's figure includes a defense buildup that helped to bring down the Soviet empire, while Bush's includes a defense builddown. Bush is no Reagan, and liberal pundits who speak of the Reagan–Bush record are dishonestly combining apples and oranges. Indeed, Mr. Bush lost because he abandoned Reaganomics and, like President Carter, made the government grow instead of the economy. If Bill Clinton intends positive change, it will mean going back to President Reagan's policies for making the economy grow instead of the government.

George Bush let Reaganomics go, relying instead on lower interest rates to work magic. When the Republican establishment's favorite elixir failed to

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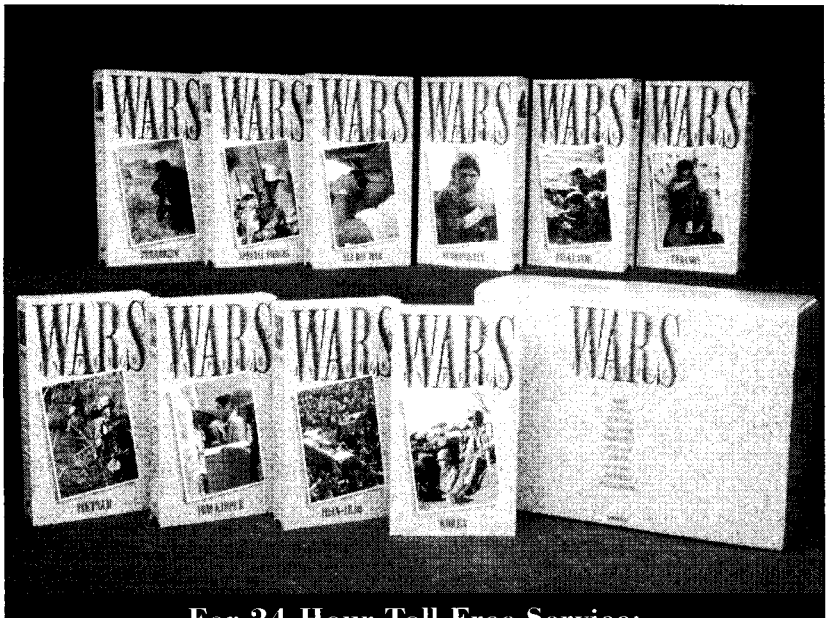

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deliver, Mr. Bush could have boosted the economy and public confidence by using his regulatory authority to index the cost basis of capital gains for inflation. He even had in his hand a ninety-page legal brief by former Assistant Attorney General Charles Cooper attesting to the appropriateness of the measure. George Bush, however, could not bring himself to use the powers of his office to help the economy, leaving a majority of voters wondering how he could be any better in a second term. □

The Foreign-Policy President

GOOD-BYE TO THE NEW WORLD ORDER

Even in his strongest area,
George Bush was all action and no talk.

ELLIOTT ABRAMS

THE Bush White House never managed to sound very enthusiastic about domestic affairs. Foreign policy was its forte, we were told. With a President well schooled in international affairs, the stolid Brent Scowcroft at his elbow, and his closest buddy, Jim Baker, at State, the Administration preferred to rest its reputation on what happened beyond our borders. How does the scorecard look today?

There are major plusses. To begin with this hemisphere, the President bit the bullet on Panama, reasserting America's ultimate security role in the hemisphere and striking a blow against drug trafficking. He built the best relationship with Mexico in U.S. history. The North American Free Trade Agreement was negotiated and signed, with a domestic consensus behind it wide enough to include Bill Clinton. The Initiative for the Americas has helped end the Latin debt crisis and move the Latins to free-market economics and freer trade. Latin America is now our fastest-growing foreign market: exports to Mexico, for example, rose 31 per cent in the first six months of this year. Cementing American security, and political and economic leadership in this hemisphere, is a little-noted but immensely valuable achievement.

In Europe, the Administration showed a deft hand regarding German unification, preserving a healthy tone in bilateral relations that will serve Mr. Clinton well. Moreover, Mr. Bush appreciated the importance of the GATT negotiations and kept at the Europeans to try for a successful outcome. In Africa, Mr. Bush helped along the immensely difficult task of reforming South Africa by refusing to genuflect to the African National Congress. In Asia, he may have leaned over too far in keeping up ties with the Chinese regime, but at least he understood the importance of the relationship. Similarly, he never succumbed to the Japan-bashing that so many American politicians could not resist. Again, he leaves his successor much to work with.

His Finest Hour

AND THEN, of course, there was Bush's supreme moment: Desert Storm. George Bush will have much to be thankful for if he is best remembered for his decision to reverse the Iraqi takeover of Kuwait. The decision should not be diminished in retrospect: Democrats in Congress were against it (with Governor Clinton carefully sitting on the fence), military experts predicted huge casualties and a long war, and editorialists as well as professors urged the President to give peace a chance by waiting months and months "for the boycott to work." Mr. Bush swept these arguments aside with courage and decisiveness, and we are all in his debt for it. Jimmy Carter would not have done it; Bill Clinton would not have done it; and there is good reason to think Ronald Reagan would not have done it either. Without Desert Storm, we would now face a nuclear-armed Iraq controlling Kuwait's oil revenue and holding the Saudis hostage to his economic and political goals. Violence and aggression would have been certified as sensible, profitable policies for any dictator with the stomach to kill. President Bush greatly enhanced our nation's security with Desert Storm, and restored to our military the reputation for competence and the public esteem so tarnished in Vietnam.

And what of the cold war? Mr. Bush presided over the tearing down of the Berlin Wall, the reunification of Germany, the collapse of the USSR, and what the Sovietologist Ken Jowitt called "the Leninist extinction" throughout the former Soviet camp. Taken together these constitute the greatest event in world politics since the Second World War and maybe since the First. No doubt Mr. Bush deserves some credit, although unreconstructed Reaganites (such as I) will wish to reserve much more of it for his predecessor.

Thus the positive; but the negative side of the ledger is lengthy as well.

The Administration was quick to celebrate its efforts in the Middle East, but the festivities are at best premature. Bush and Baker engineered an extremely sharp deterioration in U.S.–Israel relations, aimed in no small part at unseating the Likud government. No doubt Mr. Rabin appreciates it, but whether the current talks will bring real concessions from the Arab states—on an issue like the Arab boycott or non-recognition of Israel—remains to be seen.

Concerning what the press calls "Iraqgate," the Democrats are likely to start a witchhunt, once again trying to criminalize policy disputes. The madness of such prosecutions aside, the record will probably show that Mr. Baker badly mishandled relations

Mr. Abrams—whose Undue Process, *just out from Free Press, is reviewed in this issue—is currently with the Hudson Institute.*

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with Iraq, allowing Saddam to build his military and leaving him with the impression that Kuwait was his for the taking. Moreover, future misbehavior by Saddam Hussein—including efforts to acquire nuclear weapons and longer-range missiles—will only deepen the view that President Bush was mistaken to end the war when he did rather than permit destruction of more Iraqi forces and of the regime itself. Saddam's survival inevitably diminishes the President's achievement.

In this hemisphere, the Administration fell down in managing several neuralgic issues. In Haiti, it pursued a policy of backing the extreme leftist president, Father Aristide, that has produced only a wave of refugees. In Nicaragua, the Sandinistas' defeat has turned into something very like victory as they maintain a stranglehold on the country. This is Mrs. Chamorro's fault, not ours, but the Administration made it clear early on that it would do nothing that might cause Democrats on Capitol Hill to flare up. And even on Panama, the invasion followed a series of missteps that made it an inevitable last resort. Panamanian efforts against Noriega got little or no U.S. support, and so no one was left to topple him but the 82nd Airborne. The Administration's general approach to relations with Latin America was excellent, but management of these sensitive issues was deficient.

Elsewhere it was the reverse: while technical handling of issues was good, vision—yes, the word is unavoidable—was lacking. Nowhere was this more evident than in Central Europe and the USSR, where early Bush–Baker policy was to enshrine the status quo. Yugoslavian unity was made an American policy goal despite its unattainability—and its unpopularity in Yugoslavia—and the Administration's only actual intervention was the embargo that keeps Bosnia unarmed while Serbia attacks it. Worse yet was the backing for Soviet unity and for Mikhail Gorbachev, which reached its apogee when President Bush visited Kiev and lectured democrats there on why the Ukraine needed to remain under Soviet domination. The Administration argued that only Gorbachev could produce reforms, and never grasped that an empire held together by force cannot possibly loosen up the reins enough to reform. The President appeared to view the breakup of the Soviet empire, and then of the Soviet Union itself, with suspicion rather than joy.

"Hey, is this going to mean a tax increase?"

Three Fatal Flaws

THIS colossal error was the product of three flaws in Bush foreign policy that were identifiable early on. First was the "world politics as boys' club" problem—the sense that international affairs were properly left to serious men like Bush, Baker, and Scowcroft, and their pals overseas. Bush's personal relationships sometimes were valuable, as in stitching together the Desert Storm coalition. But at other times the personalities seemed to substitute, in the President's mind, for the real countries they led. It often seemed that, to the President, the "valiant little King" was more real than Jordan's perfidy during Desert Storm, and the victory of his glamorous friend Gorbachev over the uncouth Yeltsin was more important than real events on the streets of Moscow.

Second was the Administration's blindness to ideology, and to human rights and democracy. Ideology was, to Mr. Bush and his top advisors, a Reaganite deviation, one of the many pieces of California baggage they could not wait to move out of the White House. The Bushmen thought themselves supreme pragmatists, but failed to understand that—in America at least—foreign policy will not gain public support unless it reflects the country's idealism. After Tiananmen Square, the White House seemed to be more annoyed at the young troublemakers whose demonstrations had screwed up relations with Peking, than angry with Deng and his colleagues for their bloody act of repression. The Administration's long, pre–Gulf War coddling of Iraq, driven by commercial motives, simply overlooked Saddam's despicable human-rights record. And the President's own "New World Order" was almost oblivious to human rights, even omitting the two words from speeches. The "New World Order" was a worthy attempt to describe a pattern for relations between states, but altogether lacking was an effort to make the end of the cold war a

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great victory for freedom. Mr. Bush suggested that we not gloat at the Soviet collapse, when gloating and rejoicing were precisely what the country, and the Bush campaign, needed.

And third was the complaint the President resented most: the lack of vision. The beginning of the cold war saw a burst of creativity in the conception of new institutions to meet new challenges, including the World Bank and IMF on the financial side and NATO for security. When the cold war ended, a New World Order was indeed needed. What was to be America's role now? Policeman? Paladin of democracy? Would there need to be a structure of peace, or was that a fancy phrase diplomats used to justify their endless bustle? Would the world be safer now, or would a series of regional conflicts break out? If they did, would we have to intervene in all of them, as we did in Iraq, or could we stand aloof, as we are doing in Bosnia? What could we expect, and what principles would govern our actions?

The President provided no persuasive answers. If he had ideas, he did not communicate them. To face today's new problems, no new institutions were built, or even proposed; worse yet, the most valuable older one—NATO—was left to weaken. During the campaign Mr. Bush's concern about world politics seemed old-fashioned, and he himself seemed like an old soldier telling war stories, instead of a leader warning of dangers and inspiring citizens with his account of the better world that might lie ahead. Mr. Bush's only Churchillian moment came, alas, when he appeared as a wartime leader unable to satisfy demands for change in peacetime.

Unfortunately for Mr. Bush, even as voters granted his advantage over Mr. Clinton in the national-security area, they minimized it. But in a sense, so did he: he trumpeted his experience, but voters know that experience can be acquired, or they would not have voted for a former governor over an incumbent President in 1980. What Ronald Reagan did in 1980 was to link his foreign-policy ideas convincingly to the nation's and the voters' fortunes, and to explain what principles should guide American conduct in a dangerous world. When danger threatened, Mr. Bush acted bravely, but he gave citizens no vision of America's place in the world to inspire confidence or elicit enthusiasm—or votes. □

Anatomy of a Defeat

HE WAS WARNED

Mr. Bush's defeat was predictable but not inevitable. All he needed was a change of heart—and mind.

WILLIAM McGURN

HONG KONG—Here in this last great outpost of British colonialism, five thousand or so expatriate sons of America gathered at the Marriott Hotel to watch the election returns. As the reality of the Clinton victory flashed across the two large-screen TVs—images of a jubilant Little Rock, George Bush's concession speech, and the talking heads intoning "change"—it began to approach what Augustine must have felt when news of the sack of Rome reached North Africa in 410. Although it would be presumptuous to liken the end of the Bush Administration with the fall of Rome, Hillary makes a more than passable Alaric.

I never subscribed to the form of political Manicheanism that held that conservatives would best be served by a Bush defeat that brought us worse policies rather than bad ones. Perhaps it is an Irish disposition, but no matter how bad things are I always hold out the possibility that they may get worse, and I expect full vindication from President Bill Clinton. Those conservatives now celebrating the Bush defeat would do well to sober up with a copy of Grover Norquist's masterly "The Coming Clinton Dynasty" in the November *American Spectator*.

More than this, I thought—and still think—that almost until the last month Bush could have won re-election had he, even at that late stage, given people a real reason to vote for him. Never did I dream that the Bush campaign would attempt to promote its candidate solely along the lines of his opponent's untrustworthiness (especially given his own problems with credibility). In many ways it amounted to yet another broken promise: far from doing "whatever it takes to win," President Bush retained the architect of all his miserable domestic policies, Richard Darman; squelched Republican efforts at the congressional level for a genuine growth package; and continued to argue about hypothetical emergencies overseas while the media were screaming about the recession at home. For all these reasons, while everyone was counting Bush out in the summer I thought he had a chance, and while he was gaining on Clinton in the last weeks I became more pessimistic, because there appeared to be nothing of substance to put him over the hump.

From the Wreckage

IN THE midst of the encircling gloom, I have nonetheless been determined to find such few silver linings as may exist. The first is the most obvious: my departure from the nation's capital for this far-flung outpost of the British Empire well in advance of the Occupation. The second, if I may toot my own horn, is what in hindsight now appears to be an excellent estimation of the Bush Administration. Back when Mr. Bush's popularity was hovering at 80 to 90 per cent and no less than Newt Gingrich was insisting that NATIONAL REVIEW was too hard on the President, I was there, about as welcome as Banquo's ghost, writing that those who live by the polls die by the polls. As the magazine pointed out *at the time* of the now-infamous budget agreement, the problem with pragmatism is that it doesn't

Mr. McGurn, formerly NR*'s Washington Bureau Chief, is now a senior editor of the* Far Eastern Economic Review.

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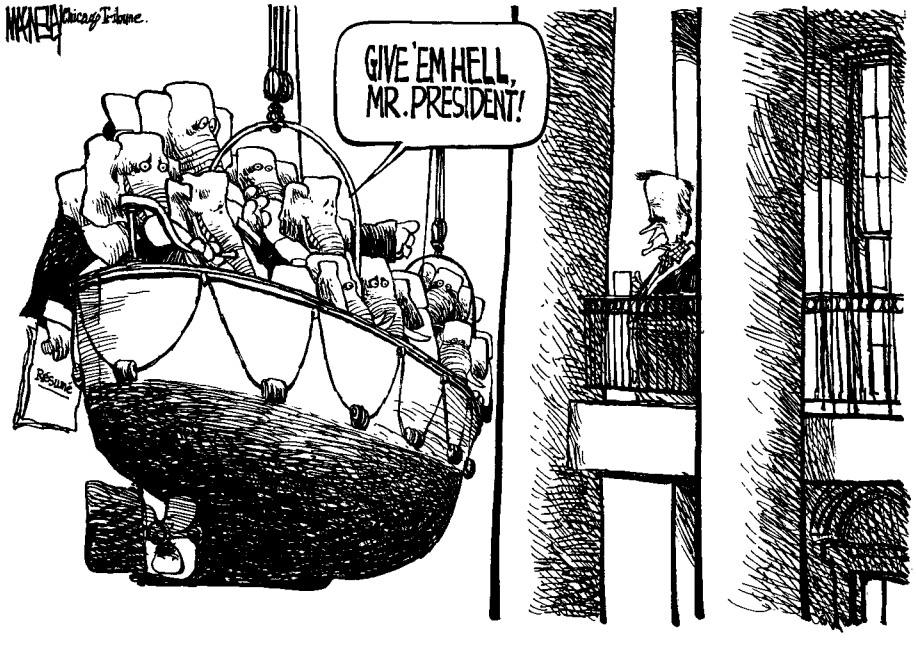
leave you anything to fall back on when you hit hard times. Wasn't that old wizard Bob Teeter talking about "shoring up the Republican base" as late as October 31?

From overseas, accurate information on American politics is difficult to come by. But from what I read in the *International Herald Tribune*—a handy compendium of the worst of both the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*—it appears recriminations have already started, and all the fingers are pointing at the campaign team.

Again, I have to confess to a certain pride here, in that while everyone was hailing Robert Mosbacher, Fred Malek, Mary Matalin, Charles Black and Co. as the Dream Team of campaigns, we ran a piece in NATIONAL REVIEW claiming that there wasn't an idea among the lot of them. At the same time, when everyone else was treating the return of Jim Baker (whose campaign credentials included the Jerry Ford effort) as the Second Coming, it wasn't clear to this reporter how better flow charts and sharper meetings and all-night strategy sessions (dutifully leaked to the press) were going to substitute for clear policy. It was clear that the essence of the Baker plan was to try to destroy Bill Clinton personally. George Bush had character.

That was never enough for an ordinary presidential candidate, much less an incumbent who had burned bridges with virtually all sections of his base. Judging from the victor, it wasn't even essential. I don't think that there exists any doubt, even among most of the people who voted against him, that George Bush is a better man than Bill Clinton will ever hope to be: as a patriot, as a husband, as a father, as a friend. The problem is that voters don't think this has much to do with being President. On top of that, all this harping on what George Bush did as a Navy pilot fifty years ago only underscored that he had no program for tomorrow.

President Bush never seemed to grasp that politics is about ideas—not during his stint in Congress, not during his time in the Reagan Administration, not even in the Oval Office. His approach to politics was essentially Old Boy, as if he were the high-school quarterback running for student-body president: Vote for me because I'm a good guy. And perhaps because his politics were so intensely personal, he tended to take disagreement among fellow party members as betrayal. Republicans in both the Senate and the House who did not go along with, for example, the 1990 tax accord were treated far more viciously than the Democratic leadership that had been at war with the Administration from day one.



Had President Bush waffled as much as he did on other points but kept his tax pledge, probably he would have had little trouble dispatching Governor Clinton. We will never know. As personally as he took politics, he never appreciated the grave damage he did not only to himself but also to the entire Republican Party, and especially the decade of Reaganism, by going back on his word. In his heart of hearts, George Bush doubtless still believes he did the right thing and was unfairly punished for it. This came through even in his apologies, both of which appeared timed to make him look as opportunistic as possible. The first came to the *Atlanta Journal Constitution* on the day of the Georgia primary, after Pat Buchanan's strong showing in New Hampshire. The second didn't come until the Republican Convention in Houston, when it was tucked in toward the end of an otherwise ho-hum speech.

In the end, what this all points back to is a lack of substance. The day after I arrived in Hong Kong, I read a wire-service story quoting Representative Vin Weber to the effect that the President needed a genuine growth bill. Mr. Weber was right, but he had been saying that for almost two years, and was as thoroughly ignored in the last week of the campaign as he was in the first weeks of the tax summit. It was not just the campaign's failure to articulate a policy. It was that George Bush didn't *have* any policy.

Me Too, but Less

THIS WAS the same failed Republicanism that characterized Nixon as well as Ford: a me-too-but-less approach that leaves the direction to be established by one's political opponents. A primary ingredient in Ronald Reagan's success was that he refused to debate his principles on his opponents' terms, knowing that he would lose a debate on "affirmative action" but win on "opportunity," lose on "fairness" but win on "growth," and so on. In sharp contrast, throughout his entire career George Bush has defined himself by what he was not: in this election he was not Bill Clinton; in the primaries he was not Pat Buchanan; in 1988 he was not Michael Dukakis; and from the "Wake me, shake me," comment at the outset of his Administration (a reference to his predecessor's sleeping when U.S. pilots shot down two Libyan fighters), he was not going to be Ronald Reagan II.

And he was as good as his word. □

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Cardiac Arrest

PETER BRIMELOW

'POP! Someone had thrown a ball at my chest . . . I sat up, shaken, startled awake. . . . A dream, probably. Or maybe just a small heart attack."

Elliott Abrams was only 43 last fall when he was rushed to the hospital from special prosecutor Lawrence Walsh's office in Walsh's official limousine. (Walsh was worried about his image. An earlier victim had attempted suicide.) The doctor said the symptoms seemed to be caused by "this pressure you are under." Abrams was indeed under pressure. He and his lawyers were negotiating the final details of what was to be a much-gloated-over guilty plea: to two charges that he had "withheld information" about the Contra support network when testifying before Congress as a Reagan Administration official back in 1986.

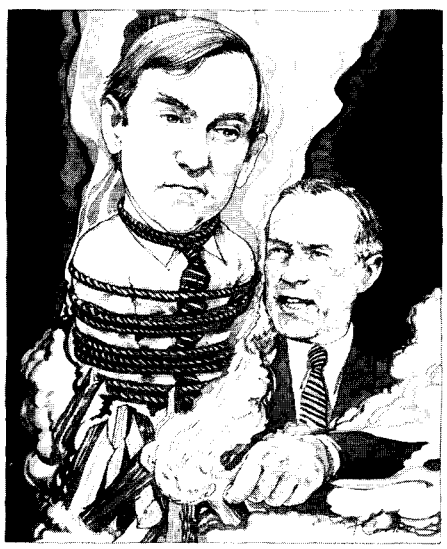
Abrams passes over this incident relatively quickly in his clear and forceful journal of the few weeks in which Walsh suddenly reactivated his case after years of silence and in effect bastinadoed a settlement out of him.

Undue Process: A Story of How Political Differences Are Turned into Crimes, by Elliott Abrams (Free Press, 250 pp., $22.95)

He is also perhaps more discreet than it appears at first sight about the impact of the ordeal on his wife and three small children, although their presence is constant in the narrative. He prefers discussing the legal and political implications. And these are indeed profound and disturbing.

Yet that poor fluttering heart cries out for attention. Like the forgotten moment in Spiro Agnew's very different memoir, *Go Quietly . . . or Else*, when his wife, informed of his decision to accept a *nolo* plea, faints dead away, it is a reminder that democratic politics is not just a spectator sport. At times, it is literally more than flesh and blood can bear.

The distinguished moral philosophers who edit *The New Republic*, in the first of what will certainly be many savage notices Abrams will receive, have been harrumphing because his publisher's blurb draws a parallel with *Darkness at Noon*, Arthur Koestler's novel about how the Old Bolsheviks were induced to confess



Fred Carlson

during Stalin's Purge Trials. But the analogy, which was scrupulously qualified, is eminently reasonable.

Like Stalin's prosecutor, Walsh was able to make headway with Abrams only when he stopped trying to prove that the Reagan Administration had really conspired to evade the vague and varying congressional restrictions on helping the Contras. (The pathetic truth was that the Administration had been so eager to please that Abrams even remembers an internal debate on whether wristwatches could be counted as "humanitarian aid," which at that point was permitted.) Instead, Walsh focused on a surreal logical point: Had Administration officials like Abrams in effect shaped their testimony to Congress to emphasize some things and downplay others?

Of course, Abrams had. Isn't that what politics is all about? It had never occurred to him that it was against the law. In fact, it's not against the law—if you are a member of Congress. The Speech and Debate Clause of the U.S. Constitution specifically grants the legislative branch absolute protection against such charges, even in the case of outright lies. This is because of the obvious danger that to do otherwise would lead to the criminalizing of political differences.

Executive-branch officials, of course, testify under oath. They are therefore subject to the strict standard of perjury as to facts. Balancing that, however, the executive branch controlled the Justice Department, from which any prosecution would normally come—until Watergate and the invention of special prosecutors.

Otherwise, nobody had previously questioned that executive-branch officials had the same sort of leeway in speech as the legislative branch. Nobody tried to prosecute Robert McNamara, for example, when he denied before Congress that the Kennedy Administration had agreed to remove Jupiter missiles from Turkey as part of the settlement of the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis, although it had. Nobody had ever interpreted essentially hortatory legislation like the Contra restrictions with such extraordinary rigor. (To illustrate this double standard: nobody has ever been prosecuted under the 1798 Logan Act confining the conduct of foreign policy to the executive branch, although legislators on "fact-finding" junkets regularly pursue a competing diplomacy, never more so than in Central America.)

All these rules were abruptly changed for one simple reason: the advent of the modern era of repeated deadlocks between a conservative Republican White House and a liberal Democratic Congress.

And this is very similar to what happened to Koestler's Old Bolshevik. After a lifetime of Marxist dialectics, he was hypnotized by being confronted with an extreme but not illogical argu-

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ment: that there was no objective difference, in a revolutionary crisis, between opposing Stalin's policies and actually conspiring against him. And he was not physically tortured. Just, well, pressured.

So Abrams was induced to plead guilty to these two heinous crimes: 1) He told Congress that no foreign-government money was supporting the Contras. This was technically true. But he knew funds had been promised by the Sultan of Brunei, although they had not yet materialized. 2) In explaining to Congress that the Administration encouraged but had not organized the private network supporting the Contras, Abrams added—speaking extemporaneously—that "we don't have conversations" with it. Of course he knew Oliver North was, literally, *talking* to the organizers. But he just meant that nothing illegal was going on.

This was Walsh's famous victory. And he needed one badly after the rout of his prosecution of North. The court, significantly, treated it with complete contempt. Abrams was sentenced to just one hundred hours of community service, two years' probation, and the $50 minimum fine required by law. But in legal fees and in terms of his shattered career, the costs to him are crushing. The bitter truth is that he would have been far better off had he spent the 1980s on Wall Street with the rest of his Harvard Law School class, rather than serving his country and saving the world.

For Abrams will never be allowed to forget the fact that he pleaded guilty. Should he have fought, as his beautiful and ferocious wife memorably advocates throughout this book? He estimates it would have cost a million dollars, which he did not have. And a large piece of his life—John Poindexter fought Walsh for five years before charges were finally dismissed.

Like Koestler's Old Bolshevik, Abrams was hypnotized by the prosecution's logic, or more precisely by the undeniable possibility that a Washington, D.C., jury would be hypnotized by it. Furthermore, he notes grimly, who remembers now the fact that Reagan Labor Secretary Ray Donovan was ultimately exonerated?

There is a villain in this book, only gently indicated: not the liberal witchhunt, unscrupulous and totalitarian though it was, but the Reagan Administration in its final, feeble stage. Maybe it looks good in retrospect. But it was the Reagan White House that panicked and triggered the special-prosecutor mechanism, that abandoned loyal officials to it, that left the executive branch so embroiled in legal snares that only the wealthy, foolhardy, or cravenly compliant can now consider serving there. Above all, it was Reagan who could have saved these men by pardoning them on his last day in office. He did not, although it would have cost him nothing. In this, he failed as a political leader and as a man.

And this failure has exacted a terrible and possibly permanent price from the conservative movement. A curious absence from Abrams's book is the name of his formidable father-in-law, Norman Podhoretz, editor of *Commentary* and leader of the neoconservative ex-Democrats, although he was obviously intimately involved with the family's torment and makes several anonymous but characteristically acerbic appearances. Yet this relationship explains something of the Democrats' fury against Abrams. And it also explains the immense pressure Podhoretz was under in exactly the weeks when his (hotly reciprocated) quarrel with Pat Buchanan reached its appalling climax, materially and perhaps fatally damaging the conservative movement's one chance to escape from the Bush catastrophe. □

Stoned Again

JOHN P. ROCHE

ENCOURAGED BY Oliver Stone's odious film, John M. Newman attempts to establish the following thesis: President John F. Kennedy secretly decided to abandon U.S. intervention in South Vietnam as soon as possible, but all his efforts were frustrated by (you guessed?) a monster conspiracy of the military, the spooks, State Department hacks, assorted hobbits, and, inevitably, Vice President Lyndon Johnson. This book, a triumph of stupefying imbecility, hardly merits notice except as a model of the "new history": most of its verifiable assertions are trivial; most of its "revelations" are hearsay or worse. Newman even cites sources so discredited they are no longer cited by other discredited sources.

JFK and Vietnam, by John M. Newman (Warner Books, 506 pp., $29.95)

So rather than detailing Newman's follies, let us explore them as typical of the genre of "new history." First, what about historical perspective? As Newman tells it, throughout 1961–64 all the principal officers of the U.S. Government were worrying or conniving over events in Indochina. In fact if we look at the priority list in foreign policy for those years, Indochina was regarded as a marginal strategic pest.

Let us recall the top items on President Kennedy's agenda: 1) Berlin, where Khrushchev had a noose around the Western sectors and was threatening to make a treaty with the East Germans and chase out the Allies; 2) Cuba, where Kennedy's macho streak beached him at the Bay of Pigs and which left every military strategist in the world wondering if the new President could run a parade; 3) the Vienna Summit, where Khrushchev treated Kennedy to a temper tantrum, literally stunning the President; 4) the Soviet resumption of atmospheric tests in August 1961, featuring a 58-megaton blast among about a hundred others; 5) the Cuban Missile Crisis; 6) the October 1962 Chinese attack on India; 7) the Indonesian policy of "confrontation," which surfaced with a ground invasion of Malaysian Borneo in March 1963; and finally 8) Indochina, initially Laos, then Vietnam, where, when JFK died, there was a military training presence of 16,500—and a power vacuum created by the murder of President Ngo Dinh Diem in an American-sponsored coup early the same month.

In short, the policy focus in these years was on the cold war in Europe. The Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), one of Allen Dulles's

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more imaginative charades, retained a ghostly presence—a Secretary General, a secretariat, and a strategy, SEATO Plan #5, to save Indochina for the Free World—but no military clout. It was never invoked during the Vietnam War (though Dean Rusk was fond of talking about it) for the simple reason that the three main signatories (Britain, France, and Pakistan) would not have come to the reunion. In 1960 President Eisenhower got quite exercised about Communist advances in Laos and passed his concern on to JFK, who in 1962 managed to move the bush-league skirmish to Vietnam.

If, like Newman, you have read the last chapters of the history books first, you will find it difficult to believe that at the time Kennedy was murdered no serious figure in the government considered Indochina a potential disaster-area. The matter was on Defense Secretary McNamara's watch until the summer of 1963, when three ardent journalist/cold warriors (David Halberstam, Neil A. Sheehan, and Malcolm Browne) began their crusade to replace Diem with some leader who would really get out there and clobber the Commies. Diem and his family fully cooperated, Buddhist-busting made page 1 of our papers, and TV shots of self-immolating bonzes filled our screens. This brought State into the play and, to make a long story (chronicled in Ellen J. Hammer's *A Death in November*) short, Harriman, Hilsman, Forrestal, and Lodge persuaded Kennedy that our national interest required a coup. With Diem and his brother Nhu disposed of, Vietnam went off the screen until Tonkin Gulf the following summer.

Meanwhile McNamara and his bureaucratic sepoys were building the paper mountain that accompanied their chief wherever he went. There were SECDEF meetings in Guam, endless requests for data, and the inevitable "TOP SECRET" stamp, usually used on the assumption that any lesser classification would eliminate readership. Newman is so proud of having turned up a wad of this stuff that he never asks: "Did anybody read it?" As a participant in Democratic politics at the time, I read enough of it to know that these documents were designed to demonstrate devotion on the part of the compiler rather than to form any basis for decision-making.

A final note on perspective: Newman almost totally neglects a key player, Attorney General and de facto White House Chief of Staff Robert Kennedy. As I have suggested in *NR* (July 22, 1988), Bobby was his brother's alter ego, and if Newman's mind-reading is accurate, a presidential willingness to escape from Vietnam would surely have been reflected in his brother's statements then, and certainly later when Bobby was out of office. What did Bobby say? In Saigon, February 1962, he announced that "we will remain here until we do win." In a retrospective taped by John B. Martin in the spring of 1964, he was asked directly: "There was never any consideration given to pulling out?" Bobby: "No." Moreover, Newman turns General Maxwell Taylor, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, into a stooge for the Chiefs in the military's mad rush to Americanize the war. The thesis is absurd—what Max thought of a couple of the Chiefs was unprintable—but it also neglects the fact that Bobby revered Taylor (whom he had gotten to chair the post-disaster analysis of the Bay of Pigs) and named one of his sons after him.

The other way in which this work fits the model of "new history" is in its definition of a "fact." Anything that has been in print immediately qualifies. To take two examples, Newman keeps repeating that Diem wanted American "combat troops" and charges that beginning with the 1961 Taylor–Rostow mission, Kennedy's aides were constantly pushing the same theme. He totally fails to catch the nuance: Diem certainly wanted combat troops to train ARVN rather than cooks and bakers or ICBM launch-crews, but he resisted *combat deployment* of American troops—that is, of Army or Marine divisions—such as later occurred. Indeed, he and Nhu thought the American military had been behind an aborted 1960 coup and were leery of, say, a U.S. armored division in the neighborhood.

This is, however, trivial by comparison with Newman's reliance on memories thirty years after the fact. A footnote will give as the source for some strange claim: "Ellsberg, interview with author, August 8, 1991" or "McGeorge Bundy, July 16, 1991" or "Colby, August 9, 1991" . . . I have been accused of having a memory in place of a mind, but anything undocumented I now say about events of thirty years ago has to be treated as suspect. This is true of others, particularly if over the years intervening they have developed a strong antiwar animus not noticeable in 1961–69.

Last, there is the two-cushion footnote, e.g., "at a White House reception on Christmas Eve [1963] Lyndon Johnson told the Joint Chiefs: 'Just let me get elected, and then you can have your war.' " Dutiful footnote: "Karnow, *Vietnam*, p. 326." Having flensed Karnow's book in my first (and last) review for *New York* magazine, I had a hunch of what was coming: it's there on page 326 *with no source*. All in all, Newman's JFK appears as a barefoot naïf. This is nonsense: he was extremely shrewd, if lazy. Admittedly he was no saint, but he never deserved to be stoned. □

Fill in the Blank

ARTHUR J. DROGE

Jesus, by A. N. Wilson (Norton, 269 pp., $22.95)

"WHO DO MEN say that I am?" "Who do you say that I am?" These are questions Jesus is reported to have asked his disciples during his lifetime. They are two of the most resonant questions in the New Testament and, indeed, in the whole of Western religious history. To the first question the disciples replied, "Some say John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets." Only Peter had the temerity to answer the second: "You are the Messiah." To this acclamation, oddly enough, Jesus demurred, ordering his followers not to tell anyone about him (Mark 8:27–30). The questions Jesus put to his disciples have endured for nearly two millennia; and Christians, Jews, and

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Muslims, saints and sinners, fundamentalists and secular humanists—all have felt compelled to respond to them. The extraordinary range of answers they have given—from the God–man of orthodox confession to magician, from political revolutionary to the founder of modern business—gives the distinct impression that Jesus has served as a kind of Rorschach test. In listening to someone answer the question, "Who was Jesus?" we are likely to learn more about the person answering than about the man from Nazareth.

A. N. Wilson, the English biographer and novelist, has added his voice to the chorus of those who would tell us who the historical Jesus was. He contends that in attempting to say something about the Jesus of history "we are likely to do irreparable harm to the Christ of faith," but Mr. Wilson has abandoned his own faith. "For many years I was a practicing Christian. . . . As the years went by, however, and as I read more . . . I had to admit that I found it impossible to believe that a first-century Galilean holy man . . . believed himself to be the Second Person of the Trinity. It was such an inherently improbable thing for a monotheistic Jew to believe."

Mr. Wilson is certainly not the first to experience a crisis of faith as a result of encountering what he calls "two hundred years of New Testament scholarship." Nor is the Jesus he ends up with strikingly new or original. Simply put, Mr. Wilson concludes that Jesus was a Galilean *hasid* or holy man who "had peculiar insights into man's relationship with God, and . . . charismatic powers of healing." "Jesus was not the Messiah, and he did not teach that he was the Messiah." Jesus taught that the kingdom would not come until his fellow Jews "recognized that they were as other men" and "could be as responsive as children to God, and as indifferent as possible to the blasphemous presence of the Romans in their midst."

Few would dispute Jesus' Jewishness, his status as a miracle worker, or his prophetic self-consciousness and apocalyptic orientation. This is, after all, the Jesus who emerges from the Gospels. Yet it is also this Jesus who, Mr. Wilson tells us, "has been in some ways much more vivid to me than he ever was when I tried to approach him through the eyes of Christian belief."

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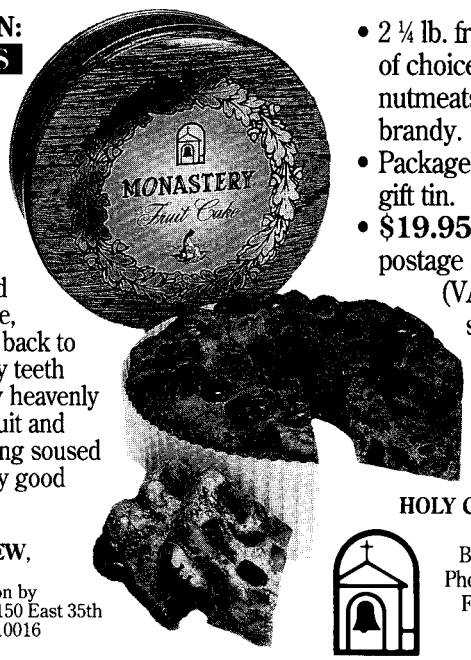

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Perhaps Mr. Wilson was so in thrall to the creedal affirmations of Nicea and Chalcedon that he never took the time to read the Gospels for himself.

What is striking about Mr. Wilson's abandonment of the Christ of faith is the religious language he uses to describe his conversion to the Jesus of history. "I have been tremendously *inspired* . . . by the writings of Geza Vermes, and in particular by his book *Jesus the Jew*. . . . Jesus *comes alive again* as a recognizable Jew of the first century. I may as well start by *confessing* that this is the Jesus in whom I have come to *believe*. I *believe* that . . ." and so on and on (emphasis added). It is disconcerting to find this kind of language in a work that "aims to be a dispassionate account of Jesus." It is certainly not the sort of language one would expect from the most rigorous historian. Mr. Wilson admits as much when he states that New Testament scholars "will find my actual methodology sadly illogical." But I fear others besides New Testament scholars will take issue with the following statement: "If it makes sense, it is wrong. That is the only reliable rule-of-thumb which we can use when testing the innumerable interpretations of Jesus' being and his place in human history." This sounds rather like Tertullian's *Credo quia absurdum est*, not the sort of confession one would expect from an ex-believer.

It is statements such as these that make apparent the problem with Mr. Wilson's *Jesus*: an inability to articulate and adhere to a sound method of sifting through the complex and at times conflicting evidence about Jesus. The closest the author comes to a statement of method is toward the end of his study, where, in discussing the trial of Jesus, he writes: "The criterion [for assessing the historical reliability of the Gospels] which I adopt is a simple one. How much could any of this evidence, plausibly, and by its own standards, be based on first- or even second-hand accounts?" Fair enough, but plausibility by itself is not a sufficient criterion. Verisimilitude is the hallmark of good fiction as much as of good history.

My point is this: If, as Mr. Wilson asserts, the evangelists "started with a set of theological beliefs about Jesus, and they fitted their narratives into those beliefs, not the other way around," then, for him, the task of extracting reliable historical information from the Gospels must be next to impossible. What is troubling is how quickly Mr. Wilson abandons this self-imposed caveat. In the preface he insists (correctly and cogently) that it is not possible "to read [the Gospels] as if they were imperfect history—as if, let us say, we chose to believe that Jesus really did teach his disciples the Lord's Prayer, but did not really perform miracles." The sentence that follows is nothing short of astounding: ". . . I do in fact commit this 'error' myself at various important junctures of my book." One cannot have it both ways and still be writing history.

The result, then, is a very sophisticated form of "prooftexting" (to be sure, most lives of Jesus proceed in this manner). Mr. Wilson chooses the passages he finds congenial and dismisses others, asserting his conclusions more than arguing for them. For example, of the encounter between Jesus and the demon-possessed man of Gadara, Mr. Wilson says, "It is an exchange which has all the ring of truth." But in what sense can a report of an exorcism of six thousand demons be said to "ring true"? Mr. Wilson insists that the Nicodemus mentioned in the Fourth Gospel was "a real person. We can read about him in Josephus." But the only Nicodemus mentioned by the Jewish historian lived in the first century B.C. Or again, "I have no difficulty in believing that the story of the Transfiguration refers to something which actually happened within the earthly lifetime of Jesus. It would be crass to try to explain it." If it would be crass to try to explain the transfiguration, then what is it to dismiss the various sightings of Jesus after his death? "My guess would be that the followers of Jesus . . . had actually seen James, or another of the brothers of the Lord." If he can accept the historicity of the transfiguration, why dismiss the resurrection? This is not crass, it is just silly.

"I hope that I have not written fiction," Mr. Wilson announces in his preface. Unfortunately, that is just what he has written. □

Rotten Fruit

DAVID KLINGHOFFER

Rob Westerberg

THOUGH he turned 67 last month, Gore Vidal looks and acts more and more like an oversized baby. In the movie *Bob Roberts*, where he plays a pompous liberal senator, Vidal appears to have gained weight and has surely lost hair, leaving his head a puffy, pastry-colored oval, not quite as soft and dilated as a baby's: the Pillsbury Doughboy of the Left. Of the two books he has published lately, readers will have to decide for themselves which is more infantile in its self-indulgence.

My money is on *Live from Golgotha*,

Live from Golgotha, by Gore Vidal (Random House, 232 pp., $22)

Screening History, by Gore Vidal (Harvard, 96 pp., $14.95)

marketed as a wicked satire on the origins of Christianity. The plot can be briefly summarized: It's the end of the twentieth century and, for unclear reasons, all the founding texts of Christianity are disappearing or, in alarming ways, changing. Stored on magnetic tape, they have become vulnerable to a mysterious computer jock, called "Hacker." So, by means of time travel, NBC hopes to send a camera crew to the Crucifixion in order to cap-

Mr. Klinghoffer is NR*'s associate literary editor.*

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ture the event for live TV. Simultaneously, a network representative has traveled back to find a surviving disciple of St. Paul, Timothy, and urge him to write his own version of the Gospel, to be discovered, intact, two thousand years later. Paul himself, called "Saint," is revealed as a liar, master fund raiser, and pederast.

Vidal's notion of wicked satire is so lame, though, that the book's true purpose quickly becomes clear. Basically, it's an occasion for him to indulge a range of perverse fantasies. Freud taught that the sexual fantasy world of infants is every bit as perverse as that of adults, while being unrestrained by morality or taboo. Vidal proves him right.

In this extended homoerotic stand-up-comedy act, not just Paul, but almost all the early Christians are depicted as ravenous gays. In leering prose which, from a 67-year-old, is more embarrassing than offensive, Vidal has St. Paul tweaking Timothy's nipples and running his hands through the boy's "golden hyacinthine curls." Their activities "in the sack" are frequently remarked on, as is the size of Timothy's reproductive organ ("the largest . . . in Asia Minor").

If Vidal's treatment of homosexual themes arouses him ("Tighten the buns. Like white marble globes. Too gorgeous. Now spread them . . ."), it also serves a strategy he has been pursuing since *The City and the Pillar*, his 1948 novel about one boy's longing for another boy. Unlike a baby, Vidal is very much aware that his desires are looked on by grown-ups with displeasure. His reaction to the burden of this guilty knowledge is to deny the source of the guilt.

Susan Sontag has written that gay culture embraces the pose of camp because, in mocking the seriousness of certain types of overly sentimental art and entertainment (Judy Garland movies are the classic example), camp surreptitiously negates the seriousness of all judgments and categories, moral and aesthetic. The payoff is obvious. If all the world is a big joke —with the exception of funding for AIDS research—then moral standards which proscribe intercourse between men are a joke, too. If Vidal can undermine the seriousness of Christianity—in particular St. Paul's strenuous denunciations of sodomy—then, bingo! He need no longer feel guilty about his

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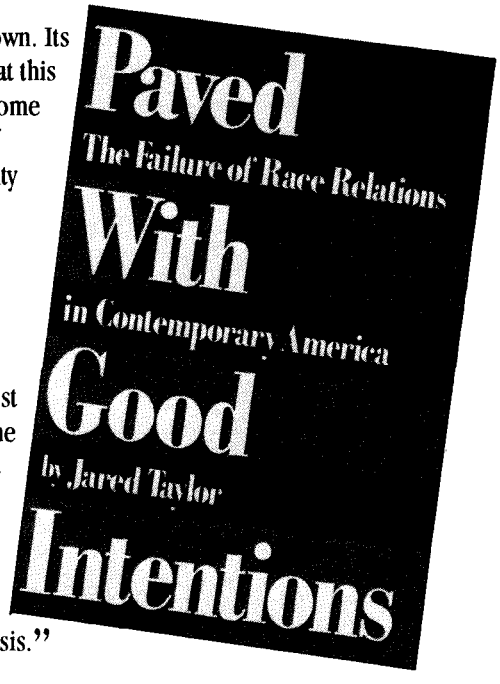

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behavior in the bedroom, whatever that happens to be.

The same motivation, I think, must partly account for Vidal's strong feelings about Jews and Judaism, to which he also gives unrestrained expression here. All of Vidal's familiar Jewish-related hobgoblins are present and accounted for: the Mossad, the "Jewish Lobby," Jews who are "Jews first," "self-loving" Jews, "narrow-minded Temple Hebrews." Jesus himself turns out to be the malevolent Hacker, with plans to blow up the world and/or launch a worldwide Zionist revolution. Identified as "Lucifer incarnate," he appears to Timothy wearing "a beanie on the back of his head in the best—that is, pious—Jewish fashion." A puzzled friend asked recently whether Gore Vidal isn't himself a Jew. I told him he must be thinking of Vidal Sassoon.

When it's not anti-Jewish or anti-Christian, much of the humor in *Live from Golgotha* depends on the reader's enjoyment of formulaic anachronism. Vidal lards the conversation of these first-century Jews with references to everything from "cyberpunks" to "Zionists." In employing this type of gag, Vidal leans heavily on a single rhetorical model, which consists of one phrase or sentence of relatively straight narration or dialogue, followed by an anachronism. A typical example, from the mouth of the Emperor Nero, goes: "I can never know if people truly hate me for myself or because I am emperor. Worse, I can never fulfill my dream to be a musician, to have a group, to travel—to have groupies!"

Vidal has said he composed this short novel on a manual Olivetti over ten years, but the thing gives instead the impression of having been improvised over several rushed evenings on a word processor. It is a measure of the ineptitude of this gassy little book that, in the two months it has been out, it has yet to produce so much as a burp from the likes of Pat Robertson. "Gore Vidal," Robertson might say if you asked him, "isn't he that Jewish fellow who sells shampoo?"

At about the same time he was finishing up *Live from Golgotha*, Vidal was asked to deliver the William E. Massey Sr. Lectures in the History of American Civilization at Harvard University. The proposed subject appears to have been Vidal's lifelong love of the movies. Instead, again, the book provides the occasion for Vidal to indulge himself. Mainly he wants to bathe in the—fantasized—glory of his "famous family."

Whenever I meet a Harvard graduate, in person and for the first time, I glance at a clock and try to guess how long he'll take to find an excuse to mention the name of his college—e.g., "That's a nice tie you're wearing. I knew a guy at Harvard who musta owned the same one." Similarly, when reading Gore Vidal's non-fiction I enjoy guessing how many pages or paragraphs it will be before he finds an excuse to mention that his maternal grandfather was a U.S. senator.

In *Screening History*, he can contain himself only until page 8. Vidal gets off some charming passages about his boyhood in Washington, D.C. His appreciation of old movies is likewise appealing—even, as in one paragraph describing Henry Fonda in the final scene of *The Young Mr. Lincoln*, beautiful. But the reader discerns that the true reason Vidal traveled to Harvard was to recount a variety of proud episodes from his early life, many already known to readers of his magazine journalism (such as the one where Gore's dad lets him, at only ten years old, fly an airplane solo), as well as to talk about his grandfather, T. P. Gore, and other famous "family" members. These include Jimmy Carter, a fifth cousin; Al Gore, "my seventh or so cousin"; and Henry Luce, who, though not in fact a relation, Vidal was as a boy "obliged to call . . . Uncle Harry." Readers will learn that John Kennedy (no relation) once told Vidal, "When you're running for President, you don't have all that time to sit around and discuss the meaning of it all." You've got to believe that only that impulse, to surround his personal history with famous names could have moved Vidal to record such a banal remark.

Vidal writes that it is now "the springtime of my senescence." "As the shadows lengthen," fund raisers from his old prep school, Phillips Exeter, circle Vidal's head "like buzzards, when not flying in formation in order to spell out against the sky the chilling phrase: Estate Planning."

No, he doesn't have AIDS. He's just getting old, and he knows it. Is it too late to suggest to Gore Vidal that he grow up? □

FILM

In Troubled Waters

JOHN SIMON

NOT HAVING read Norman Maclean's acclaimed autobiographical novella ***A River Runs through It***, I can't say how much better it is than the movie Richard Friedenberg has written, and Robert Redford directed, from it. A lot, I hope.

The story is a reminiscence of a brother who was an inspired fly fisherman, but came, because of his gambling-den debts, to a sticky end. This doomed younger brother, Paul, and Norman are the sons of Reverend Maclean, a stern but soft-spoken Scottish Canadian Presbyterian minister, who, with his equally staunch wife, settled in Montana, in the sort of setting usually described as God's Country. The father, a dedicated fly fisherman, brings his sons up to experience this pursuit as a way of life, a supreme art form, a mystery that runs a close second to religion. So the film tells you everything about fly fishing that you never would have dreamed of asking.

Paul, a misfit in other ways, was a fly-fishing wizard, an innovator, a creature in the state of grace by virtue of the quantity and size of the trout he caught, and by the uniquely gorgeous way he cast for them, not to mention his few but impeccably tied and chosen flies. Grace, apparently, is measured by such things. True, Paul casts with the *fioritura* of an Italian operatic tenor or fencing master, but still, I ask, Grace? You might as soon judge a secretary's closeness to God by how many words she can type in a minute.

Of course, the Montana landscapes, or riverscapes, and the woods and mountains beyond, are almost unbearably beautiful. As photographed by that luminous cinematographer Phi-

Mr. Simon, NR*'s film critic, is also theater critic for* New York *magazine.*

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lippe Rousselot, every outdoor frame is too yummy to behold: this film should be licked, not just seen. It would taste, I dare say, of mint, wild thyme, and aromatic ferns (if there is such a thing). The actors look archetypally American (even those who are British), and belong less in a movie than in a Norman Rockwell calendar. Robert Redford serves as his own narrator, and his voice is a balm to the ear glutted with urban noise.

The writing strikes me as no different from that in any commercial movie that makes the mistake of striving for art. Friedenberg, apparently, spells out a great many things that Maclean left deliberately vague or blank, a kind of elaboration that seldom pays off. The fruitiest verbiage (Maclean's own)

Alan Nahigian

is reserved for the countless fly-fishing episodes, and it left me bemused, like a detailed account of the joys of sex from the lover of a woman I consider repellent. The rest of the movie is standard stuff, and whoever cherishes homespun sentimentality will find it here in inexhaustible supply.

Brad Pitt, his hair dyed blond, makes Paul a heady charmer indeed, doubtless not coincidentally looking just like a young Robert Redford; there may even be some real acting buried under all that charm. Contrariwise, Craig Sheffer, as Norman, strikes me as a bore, well beyond the demands of the role. With a beetle brow overhanging tiny, deep-set eyes whose gaze may be the posthumous light from a distant dead star, he is neither handsome nor talented, only foursquare. Tom Skerritt is correct enough as the man of God and fish. The British ac-

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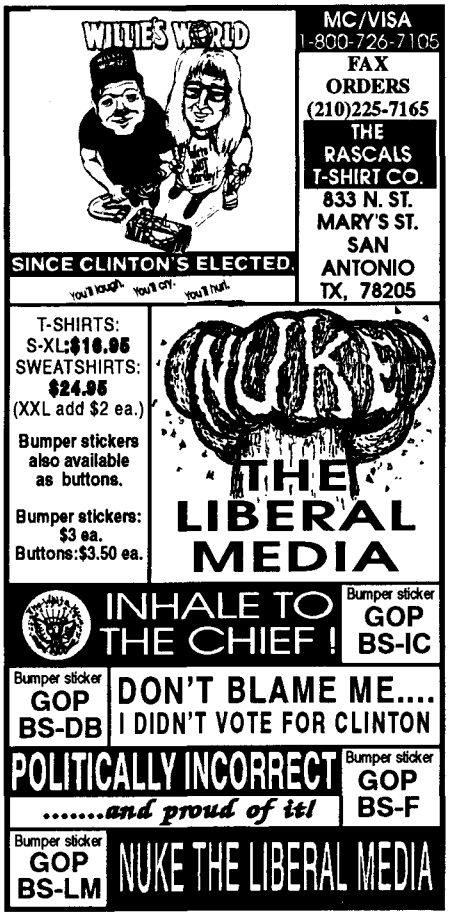

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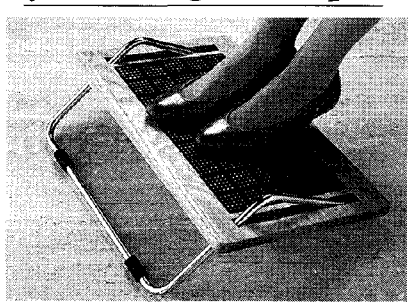

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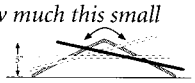

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tress Emily Lloyd (best remembered as the sexy teenager in *Wish You Were Here*) has grown into a remarkably plain young woman with a trapezoidal face, but she plays Norman's love interest perfectly adequately. Another Britisher, Brenda Blethyn, does decently by the boys' mother, an infelicitous role that offers scant chance to act, and none to fish.

The minor parts are well taken, notably by Nichole Burdette as Paul's half-Cherokee girlfriend, and Susan Traylor as the town's often sozzled whore. Perhaps I should give you the last voiceover words, taken straight from the novella: "Eventually, all things merge into one, and a river runs through it. The river was cut by the world's great flood and runs over rocks from the basement of time. [A bargain basement by the sound of it.] On some of the rocks are timeless raindrops. Under the rocks are the words, and some of the words are theirs. [So that's why they sound like something that crawled out from under a rock.] I am haunted by waters. [No comment.]" We have, by the way, been informed that none of the movie's specially bred trout came to any harm. No matter, since everything else about the film is good enough to eat.

■ There has been a proliferation of films about Vincent van Gogh, the painter who, along with Rembrandt, most exercises the popular imagination. And Van Gogh has the edge over Rembrandt for having been mad; there is nothing the public relishes more than the image of the artist as madman and failure. A painter who in his 37 years sold only one painting—there's something to feel comfortingly superior to! "And yet what beauty the poor fellow created," the prosaic burgher sighs with patronizing melancholy, to show that he is no philistine, after all.

Whatever one may say against Maurice Pialat's ***Van Gogh***, one must concede that it is the most detailed scrutiny yet of Van Gogh's last phase, and the least conventional. It's the final 67 days of the painter's life, under the supervision of Dr. Gachet at Auvers-sur-Oise, that this 155-minute movie examines. Pialat is in some ways a kindred spirit of Van Gogh's: he, too, was a painter; he, too, tried various things before finding his real calling; he, too, is said to be hard to get along with. The film is an interesting combination of telling all (including some apparently new findings) realistically, and also respecting the ultimate mystery of genius without trying to explain it away.

I am insufficiently versed in the vast literature on Van Gogh to say how much of the movie, which Pialat both wrote and directed, is documented fact, and how much surmise or pure invention. But as Pialat conceives Vincent, and as Jacques Dutronc plays him, this is more of a normal human being tormented by syphilis-induced headaches and outbursts of fury than some sort of divine madman lightly touching the earth on his transit to the stars. He has an affair with Marguerite, Gachet's spirited but undisciplined daughter; abandons her for his former favorite among prostitutes, then resumes with her; has a complicated relationship with his devoted brother and keeper, Theo, and Johanna, Theo's wife, whose financial concern for their growing family conflicts with her husband's fraternal charity; and finds Dr. Gachet rather less tolerant after he discovers the dalliance with his daughter.

Dr. G. Kraus, the Dutch alienist who published a 49-page analysis of Van Gogh's "illness" in 1941, could not resolve what it was, though he did call it psychopathic: "In his art no less than in his 'illness,' [Van Gogh] was an individualist," he concluded. But the painter Paul Signac, a friend of Vincent's, wrote, "Never did he give me the impression of being a madman. Though he ate hardly anything, what he drank was always too much . . . absinthes and brandies would follow one another. . . . He was charm personified. He loved life passionately." There are as many Van Goghs as there are people writing about him.

Pialat's Vincent does not drink all that much, but he is intense, unpredictable, sometimes violent. Mostly, though, he is silent and aloof. The talking is done chiefly by others, notably Marguerite, who chatters on and on. Although the cut-off ear is mentioned, when the camera zeroes in on it, we see it is unscathed. Is Pialat trying to tell us something, or was it simply easier and cheaper not to bother? Dutronc, though a good actor, evidently did not take the role seriously enough to sacrifice so much as a lobe

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to it. The actor did not even make much of an effort to achieve physical likeness to Vincent, just as the excellent Bernard Le Coq is not made up to look like Theo. A beard is as far as either will go toward visual verisimilitude—perhaps just as well.

Authoritativeness is achieved in other ways. What little we see of Vincent's hand as it attacks a canvas looks authentic, as do the sitters and landscapes of Vincent's paintings. But the paintings are not brought to life in emphatic, extended fashion; they are tossed off with canny casualness. So, too, fellow artists such as Toulouse-Lautrec and Suzanne Valadon (then still an artist's model) make appropriately throwaway appearances, even as life in the bistros and brothels is swiftly but flavorously captured.

There is good acting from everyone, notably from Gérard Séty as a well-meaning, supportive, but not especially competent—and eventually torn and exasperated—Gachet, and from Leslie Azzoulai as the quietly devoted innkeeper's daughter who intermittently looks after Vincent. The film is rich in atmosphere, and conveys moods incisively, but answers no previously unanswered questions. Two and a half hours plus is a long time, and there are moments when we do yearn for that gunshot to ring out across the wheatfields.

For my money, the finest evocation of Van Gogh's spirit is still the shortest: Jacques Prévert's magnificent poem "*Complainte de Vincent*," with such verses in it as "*Il a le regard bleu et doux / Le vrai regard lucide et fou / De ceux qui donnent tout à la vie.*" I cannot translate this—nobody can—without losing the music, the poetry: the very things that Pialat's film cannot catch for all its dogged sincerity.

■ Jean-Jacques Annaud proved himself a master filmmaker with his very first feature, the superb *Black and White in Color*. Although his next, *Coup de tête*, was worthy, too, he then veered into big, Hollywood-oriented films, meant somehow to combine the classy with the audience-coddling. Of these, *Quest for Fire* was the best, *The Name of the Rose* the worst. Now Annaud has adapted (with Gérard Brach) an even much sleazier international bestseller than Umberto Eco's: the insufferable Marguerite Duras's allegedly autobiographical ***The Lover***.

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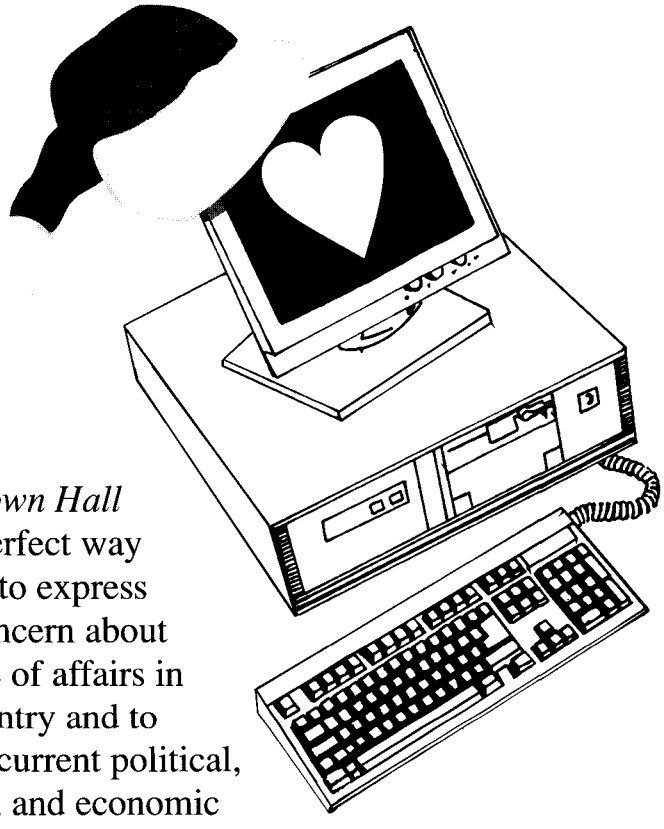

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This is the tale of the fifteenish Young Girl's getting involved with a rich thirty-something Chinese merchant, though she hates the Chinese in Indochina, where her impoverished widowed mother and two brothers are stuck. The daring, doomed clandestine affair will have to end when the girl's family returns to France, or even sooner, when the businessman will have to marry an equally wealthy Chinese girl in a prearranged, loveless match. The movie, like the novel, contains some interesting insights into cultural differences, and the feel of life in prewar Saigon and environs is persuasively re-created *in situ*. But this remains a piece of queasy erotica in which the now old, ugly, and egomaniacal Duras narcissistically exalts her youthful self.

Annaud made the film in English, with an eye to the box office. He cast as the Young Girl the sultrily sullen nymphet-like Jane March, who, with the help of creditable acting and five body doubles, manages to be quite a hot little number. The Hong Kong action-movie star Tony Leung, with only two body doubles and dubbed by a more high-class British voice, is less appealing. People whose own fantasies tap into *The Lover*'s central situation—involving a secret apartment for torrid yet seemingly affectless trysts—may enjoy this; others won't.

The minor characters are, as in the novel, preposterous caricatures; the once great Jeanne Moreau supplies the narration (in good English, the language of her mother, though even she trips up on the word *recognize*, a veritable *pons asinorum* for foreigners); her voice, however, sounds even older than the old Duras's it is supposed to represent. Ah no, Annaud! □

MANNERS IN BROOKLYN

Great Expectations

RICHARD BROOKHISER

I FIRST SPOTTED Menachem Schneerson, the *rebbe* or leader of the Lubavitcher sect of Hasidic Judaism, on late-night cable TV. Tapping through the preachers, the pundits, and the shows of yesteryear, one would suddenly come upon a keen-eyed, thick-bearded old man in a black coat and fedora, speaking in Yiddish to a dense crowd of men, similarly dressed. Sometimes his listeners burst into song, which he encouraged with go-team shakes of his arm: when they stopped, he resumed. It looked live, from nineteenth-century Russia. In fact, it was all happening in Brooklyn. Only in America.

Rebbe Schneerson has not led such a meeting in years, and a stroke this spring kept him from public appearances for six months. Meanwhile, the Lubavitchers keep on with their daily lives: working to bring Jews back to Orthodox practice, and awaiting the coming of the Messiah, perhaps (they suspect, and opponents denounce them for it) in their own neighborhood.

Rebbe Schneerson and many of his followers live in Crown Heights, a Brooklyn neighborhood that has become mostly black. In August 1991, it became a mini Los Angeles when a driver in Schneerson's motorcade struck and killed Gavin Cato, a Guyanese boy; three days of rioting ensued, and Yankel Rosenbaum, a 29-year-old Lubavitcher from Australia, was stabbed by a black mob. The dying Rosenbaum identified Lemrick Nelson Jr., a black teenager, as his killer. A year later the side streets were quiet and neat. A banner spreading across one of them declares that MOSHIACH [Messiah] IS ON THE WAY—BE A PART OF IT!

Schneerson's office is in a gabled brick house on Eastern Parkway; the room made famous by cable is the basement of a run-down apartment building next door. The Friday night I went there to see a service, it was packed with hundreds of dark-clothed worshippers. In a brown suit and a yellow tie, I looked like Charles II. Women watched from behind the darkened window of a gallery reserved for them. The cantor kept the service moving along, but members of the congregation went about their prayers at their own tempo, with the hum of an orchestra tuning up. The Rebbe's red velvet chair sat on a platform to the right of the ark, empty.

Hasidism is a mystical movement that arose in Eastern Europe in the early eighteenth century, in reaction to rabbinical aridity and frustrated messianic hopes. Lubavitchers trace themselves to a Hasidic rabbi, Shneur Zalman, whose son moved to the Russian town of Lubavitch in 1814, whence the name of the sect. The sixth *rebbe* survived Soviet prison and the Nazi bombing of Warsaw, and came to the United States in 1940. Ten years later, his son-in-law, Menachem Schneerson, became the seventh *rebbe*.

"Democracy and freedom are not a cauldron of assimilation," Schneerson said early in his tenure. Instead, they offer "the opportunity for the Jew to fulfill his life's destiny." That destiny is to obey the 613 commandments of the Bible (as, needless to say, the Lubavitchers read them). Lubavitchers believe that in every Jew, however secular or religiously liberal, there is a "spark" of religious Orthodoxy. So they cruise city streets in vans gaily blaring Hasidic music; run ads in papers urging Jews to light menorahs; start Jewish dayschools in places as far-flung as Kinshasa.

One Lubavitcher I spoke with recalled the territory he had covered as a Jewish circuit rider four decades ago: Virginia, the Carolinas, Georgia, Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Canada, Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic. One of his sons had just returned from a trip to Bangkok, Manila, Singapore, and Tokyo. The Lubavitchers bring an all-American flair to these activities. They may have come from Russia and be headed for Zion, but their PR is pure Madison Avenue.

For the last year or so, the Lubavitchers have been bearing an additional message, vouchsafed by the *rebbe*: the Messiah is coming soon. All Orthodox Jews are supposed to believe that the Messiah will come, and to pray for the event, but the Lubavitchers would seem to be on an accelerated timetable. Schneerson, one young Lubavitcher put it, "has told me Moshiach is coming. He has never told me anything false."

He has also never said that he is the Messiah-in-waiting, though the inference arises from the devotion Lubavitchers accord him. In every generation, Orthodox Jews believe, there is a potential Messiah, and in this genera-

Mr. Brookhiser, an NR *senior editor, is a columnist for the* New York Observer.

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tion, Lubavitchers believe, who else could it be? Yet "at the end of the day," as one Lubavitcher told me, "it doesn't matter who is Moshiach, but that he come."

Schneerson himself is good at deflecting even normal forms of praise. I watched several hours of videotapes of a function he performed until his stroke, giving away dollar bills which were then to be given to charity. Thousands showed up for bills and blessings, Hasids and non-Hasids, kids in Purim costumes, old men on crutches, and dozens of American and Israeli politicians. I don't know Hebrew, so I couldn't understand the Israelis, but I assume they were as unctuous as the Americans. I'll take messianists over pols any day. One oily Brooklyn assemblyman told Schneerson to his face that he was "amazing." "What good does it do the community if I am amazing?" Schneerson replied.

Janet Hamlin

What should we think of this? Christians, who as far as the Messiah goes are more interested in the ideas of certain dead Jews than in those of any number of live ones, need not think anything in particular. Jews have a thornier problem, though the Lubavitchers' belief that the spark within every Jew can be fanned one commandment at a time keeps them just within the big tent of intra-religious civility. Since their attitude is not "all or nothing," but "all, meanwhile something," many a Jew feels grateful to them for having been impelled toward something, even if he does not expect the Messiah soon.

As Americans, we should have no problem at all. American history is littered with people who expected the end of the world, or the arrival of a new one. The Mormons did; so did the Puritans; so did Columbus. Even the Founding Fathers, those bewigged Deists, put NOVUS ORDO SECLORUM on the Great Seal of the United States, under a winking Illuminatist eyeball. We can probably handle one more new world on Eastern Parkway.

Last month, a jury found Lemrick Nelson not guilty of the murder of Yankel Rosenbaum. The defense argued that the cops were under community pressure to find a victim, and any defense lawyer with a black client who can concoct a theory of police conspiracy has an even chance of convincing a New York jury these days. When the verdict was announced, crowds of peaceful but angry Lubavitchers filled the streets of Crown Heights. "Jewish blood is not cheap," Rosenbaum's brother told TV cameras. Until the new world arrives, the old one can lay heavy on its children. □

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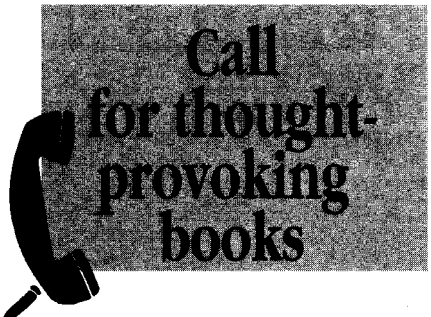

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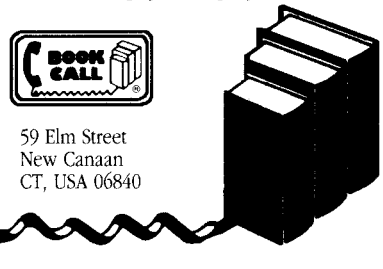

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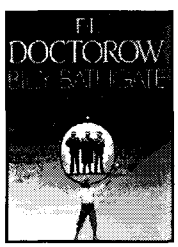

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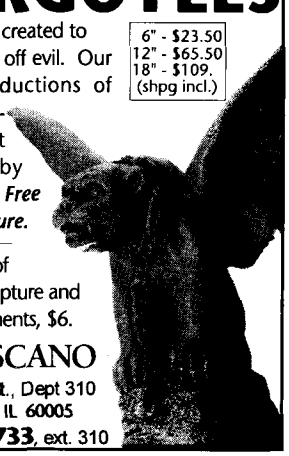

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ple to pose with you for lewd photographs or to run for President and accuse others of fabricating them.

—EVA RESNIKOVA

The Senator: My Ten Years with Ted Kennedy, by Richard Burke (St. Martin's, 328 pp., $23.95)

A PERSONAL assistant to Senator Edward M. Kennedy in the late 1970s, Richard Burke left his job after he was found to have faked death threats to himself and an attempt on his own life. Now, after business failures and bankruptcy, Burke has written an exposé of his years with Kennedy. Why should anyone believe this guy? Burke addresses the problem cleverly by admitting that he told all those lies. But he says it was the booze-soaked, drug-laced, womanizing years with Kennedy that made him crazy and desperate enough to do it. Burke reports that Kennedy not only drank but used cocaine regularly, at least once with his children, and slept with one blonde after another—or, when possible, two at a time. Burke says he wanted to quit his job but was afraid of angering the senator. Finally he snapped and began conjuring up those phony threats. When his emotionally disturbed state was exposed, he had his justification for departing. Burke admits that Kennedy's decadence was limited in scope; the senator was a loving father and often acted out of real political principle. In other words, Kennedy's life, even in Burke's telling, was less disgusting than Burke's decision to write about it. Burke says that even before publication, Kennedy's friends began a campaign to discredit his book. This time around, it is hard not to sympathize with them. —SUZANNE GARMENT

Cleaning House: America's Campaign for Term Limits, by James K. Coyne and John H. Fund (Regnery Gateway, 235 pp., $21.95)

WITH TERM limits all the rage, *Cleaning House* illustrates how Congress has exempted itself from the laws it imposes on us and abused privileges it has grabbed as its own, all the while running the nation's finances into the ground. The authors provide all the statistics and all the stories of an arrogant Congress: the pork, the special interests, the accumulation of power in the hands of committee chairmen. If term limits can make the typical stint in Washington an act of true public service—taking, say, six years out of your private-sector career to apply prudence and frugality in making laws and spending your neighbor's money—then they will have served their purpose. But how realistic is that expectation? Will the tenure of unelected staff also be limited? Will a member, after his time is up, be free to move to the next district? The authors do not fully answer such questions. Though there are large obstacles to effective reform (especially the overbearing weight of incumbency), I believe the idea will go from rage to reality before the turn of the century—and *Cleaning House* will have pointed us in the right direction.

—GEOFFREY MORRIS

The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities, by Richard L. Bushman (Knopf, 304 pp., $40)

SOCIAL climbing through American history is a good idea for a book, an idea that occurred to Professor Richard Bushman of Columbia and produced this well-intentioned if over-long study. Americans have always wanted to improve themselves in the eyes of others, and it is this story, often humorous, sometimes cruel, but always instructive, that Bushman wishes to tell. He takes the reader firmly into the front parlor and presents it as the central moral and social dilemma of the nation, beginning in the eighteenth century (earlier there was neither time nor wealth to spare for putting on airs) to the mid nineteenth. The front parlor satisfied frontier pride by signifying the achievement of gentility, but at the same time its class-consciousness, for that was the reason behind it, undermined the society's commitment to egalitarianism. The book is densely written, with detail piled on detail, and yet Mr. Bushman often gives the impression that no one had ever read anything or thought anything about American society until he came along. Fanny [*sic*] Trollope, who wrote the book on early American social pretension, is hardly mentioned; Mark Twain, Henry James, Edith Wharton, the experts on American *arrivisme*, not at all.

—NICHOLAS KING

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TRANS-O-GRAM / Kem Putney

1 H	2 E	3 M		4 C	5 T	6 G	7 B		8 A	9 D	10 J		11 N	12 P	13 F	14 L	15 O	16 C	17 H	18 Q
19 E		20 B	21 A	22 H	23 S	24 I	25 P	26 J	27 D	28 K	29 L		30 U	31 M	32 A	33 H	34 J	35 O	36 Q	37 I
38 F		39 N	40 R	41 G	42 C	43 E		44 L	45 P	46 T		47 D	48 A	49 B	50 J	51 G	52 Q	53 M		54 N
55 H	56 P	57 I	58 T	59 J	60 F	61 A	62 L		63 O	64 G		65 D	66 I	67 C		68 R	69 N	70 H	71 E	72 J
	73 Q	74 P		75 S	76 B	77 F	78 K	79 Q	80 D	81 E	82 H	83 J		84 O	85 I		86 N	87 L	88 C	
89 G	90 K	91 A	92 C		93 H	94 S	95 D	96 L	97 P		98 M	99 H	100U	101T		102M	103F	104E	105P	106G
	107P	108N		109R	110I		111G	112B	113D		114O	115E	116H	117F		118B	119P		120D	121I
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	155I	156R	157Q	158A	159K		160J	161O		162Q	163E	164C	165L							

DEFINITIONS

A. Construction site sight — 91 158 128 32 8 21 61 48

B. On the way — 112 76 20 118 49 139 7 150

C. Tourists, usually — 92 164 154 16 4 123 136 88 42 67

D. What's left when the sun sets — 47 80 113 27 95 120 137 9 65

E. The Beatles sang of this wood — 104 115 71 127 43 19 81 163 2

F. Wire — 38 103 138 77 117 129 60 13

G. Celebrates an anniversary — 89 64 130 6 143 111 41 51 106

H. Increase — 124 22 93 99 148 33 17 82 1 55

133 70 116

I. Traditional American symbol (2 words) — 121 37 57 24 110 85 66 155

J. Like our Congress — 83 147 34 125 59 72 160 10 50 134

26

K. Loin- or cheese-, for example — 78 28 90 145 159

L. Melon variety — 87 96 149 62 29 165 14 44

M. Experienced the spirits — 102 31 151 98 53 135 3

N. Brash young guys — 132 152 86 54 69 108 39 11

O. City in northern Indiana — 161 114 140 63 84 35 15

P. Explosion — 105 25 107 56 119 45 97 142 12 74

Q. Baltic state — 36 162 157 73 18 79 52

R. Cleansings — 109 156 131 40 68

S. Famed ski locale — 146 75 23 94 153

T. Appreciation — 122 5 144 101 58 46

U. Icelandic literature of note — 141 126 30 100

DIRECTIONS

The object of TRANS-O-GRAM is to fill in the puzzle diagram by guessing the words from their definitions, and transferring each letter of the guessed word to the correspondingly numbered square in the diagram. When the diagram is filled in it will spell out a quotation from some published work (reading normally from left to right, black boxes indicating the ends of words); also, when the words have all been filled in above, their initial letters will spell out the author and title of the quoted work. The acrostic feature, and the relative word-lengths in the diagram, will assist in the solution. Spelling and definitions on the authority of *Webster's New International Dictionary*, Second Edition.

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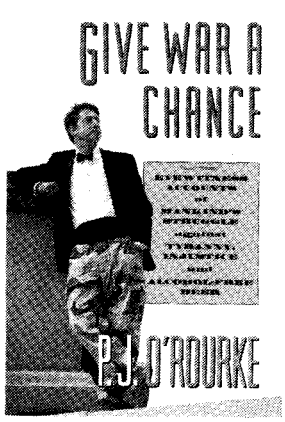

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Bush Congratulates Clinton

NEW YORK, NOVEMBER 4

I had a friend who took so seriously the marriage vow that he disliked and even disapproved of friendly divorces. "If they separate, it ought to be because they simply cannot bear each other's company." The observation came to mind last night during Mr. Bush's congratulatory speech. He had spent the better part of three months denouncing Bill Clinton as a draft-dodger, as a liar, as an inexperienced yuppie and an ideological menace. Now he was congratulating him on his victory: but doing really something more. When he referred to the "majesty" of democracy he seemed to be saying that democracy does the right thing. But how can doing the wrong thing be the same as doing the right thing?

There is no question left about what democracy wanted on Tuesday. One thing it wanted emphatically, which was to oust George Bush from the White House. There were reasons for doing this extrinsic to his reign as President, other reasons traceable to his reign. The pollsters seemed to agree that if unemployment had been two points lower, and the rate of growth of GNP two points higher, Mr. Bush would have won. But nobody can say with authority that these two objectives might have been Mr. Bush's for the asking. Ask any roomful of economists how he might single-handedly have accomplished the two economic goals, and glossolalia will overcome you (a recent discovery: no two economists agree with each other). To that extent, then, Mr. Bush was the victim of the business cycle, which respecteth not its victims irrespective of race, color, creed, or sexual inclination.

On the personal point, Mr. Bush did not succeed in inspiriting his followers, let alone in increasing their number. What was his decisive mistake? He said at the convention that he was not given to eloquence—that, for him, eloquence consisted in action. But he did not, in the days since Houston, engage in any action other than verbal action. He did not take action against genocide in Yugoslavia, starvation in Somalia, the creeping Balkanization of Great Russia. He didn't pronounce a realistic basis for measuring capital gains, nor assert authority to exercise a line-item veto. What he did do most persistently was to attack the qualifications of Bill Clinton to be President of the United States.

Now, as pointed out before in this space, to do this was an infinitely provocative act. By the time Mr. Bush began to postulate the disqualifications of Bill Clinton, about one-half of the American voting public had plighted its troth to Clinton. One really doesn't enjoy lectures about how the lady to whom one is betrothed is a) a misfit, b) dangerous, and c) a whore. It's okay to say that she is not going to make a good wife, given her interests in matters other than the welfare of the family: that much is expected. But not (in my judgment) the kind of thing Mr. Bush said about Bill Clinton, whom he addressed as half clown, half baby molester. In reaction, those who had declared themselves as ardent Clintonians reiterated their vows more fervently. Others, who had been mere spectators, judged the ferocity of the attack quite simply undeserved, and their penchant for fair play aroused protective instincts. The vote of women for Clinton is being interpreted as a protest against Mr. Bush's pro-life position. My own guess is that much of that vote was maternal in nature: for many, Clinton emerged as a boyish victim of the Chief of State, who was engaged in bullying tactics. That, plus the perplexity of the surrounding situation: How could the husband of Barbara Bush engage in such billingsgate? The image of George Bush as the patrician master of his orderly house suffered.

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And so there he was, congratulating not only Mr. Clinton (how do you parse such a congratulation? "I want to congratulate Mr. Clinton on his extraordinary skill in disguising his lack of patriotism, his inexperience, his wretched job as governor of Arkansas, and his indifference to family values, sufficiently to seduce the majority of the American people into voting for him"). Mr. Bush was engaging in a formality. The whole thing was sad, grotesque, even. □

The KGB Exonerates Hiss

NEW YORK, NOVEMBER 6

The news story all but spoke of Alger Hiss as having been definitively cleared. By the U.S. Supreme Court? Oh no. By a Russian general-historian, Dmitri A. Volkogonov. A man of high reputation, who however, in "clearing" Alger Hiss of having served as a spy for the Soviet Union, takes rather unusual liberties. Americans may assume that the general has access to KGB or GRU files, because the general is chairman of the Supreme Council Commission on KGB and military-intelligence archives. But to assume that after four or five weeks he established that Alger Hiss was never a Communist agent for the Soviet Union, a) says odd things about him as a historian (you can't begin to go through KGB files thoroughly in five years, let alone five weeks); and b) makes him suddenly an expert on American judicial history.

You see, said the general at his interview with Hiss emissary John Lowenthal, during the cold war people were quick to suspect other people of complicity with the enemy. "The fact that [Alger Hiss] was convicted in the Fifties was a result of either false information or judicial error." The next day on CNN the reporter identified Alger Hiss as "having gone to jail for allegedly committing perjury." Yes, and Ted Bundy was executed for allegedly murdering ten women.

A letter from historian Gertrude Himmelfarb: "As a former grubber in archives (better organized archives, on less secretive and sensitive subjects), I assure you that one month of searching and inspecting is no time at all—certainly not enough time to produce the categorical judgment attributed to the general. In fact, a categorical judgment

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of this kind is itself suspect; historians always qualify their conclusions, cover themselves lest subsequent findings refute them. There is something very odd about this whole story . . . Remember Trevor Roper's gaffe about Hitler's secret diaries?"

Indeed. But the movement to exonerate Hiss has run into so many obstacles over so many decades that to declare him innocent is on the order of declaring Dreyfus guilty. *Newsweek* reports: "Alger Hiss is still on trial in America. Was he a spy, a member of a secret Communist cell who passed along confidential State Department reports to the Soviets? Or was he a statesman framed by the fanatical Right, a wanton sacrifice to the careers of Sen. Joseph McCarthy and Rep. Richard Nixon? The legal system never resolved the question." Those sentences are historical travesties of a major order. (The legal system absolutely resolved the question.) Yet they appear in a national American newsweekly.

The overwhelming case against Alger Hiss is documented by Professor Allen Weinstein in his book *Perjury*. That book was judged as dispositive of the Hiss case by historian Arthur Schlesinger Jr., who was not a McCarthyite. Every legal maneuver, caprice, effrontery, was attempted on behalf of Alger Hiss, and always these efforts to turn history around came to naught. The incriminating papers were typed on Hiss's typewriter, they were given to Whittaker Chambers, and he sent them up the assembly line to his Soviet superiors.

And it isn't as though all evidence against Hiss died with Chambers in 1961. Only two years ago, Oleg Gordievsky, the Soviet Union's spy chief in London from 1982 until his defection in 1985, published a book, *KGB: The Inside Story*. In a footnote Gordievsky referred to Iskhak A. Akhmerov as "Hiss's wartime [KGB] controller." And U.S. writer and spy-watcher Thomas Powers, writing in *The New York Review of Books* on August 17, 1989, advises us that the codename for Alger Hiss in the Soviet Union was "Ales."

There is more to be said about the Chambers story, and a gifted young historian (Sam Tanenhaus) is working on a comprehensive biography of the great witness who gave us *Witness*. General Volkogonov is a nice man, but it really was a little odd when he produced his certificate that Alger Hiss was a Victim of McCarthyism, and said: "I would like to hand this document over . . . and believe that you can tell Mr. Alger Hiss that the heavy weight should be lifted from his heart." How nice. All we need to do, in order to lift that heavy weight from Alger Hiss's heart, is to defame the American system of justice, classify as libelous dozens of witnesses who built the case against him, and reject as a sadistic liar a great man who, unlike his old spymate Alger Hiss, tried to make it up to the country he betrayed. □

Thatcher Lives

FLORENCE, OCTOBER 26

Lady Thatcher (as we now refer to her) is England's Henry Kissinger in the sense that she/he never quite recedes from sight, both because they are extraordinarily energetic human beings and because they have a great deal to say that people find interesting. At a dinner in London, one guest busily explained (or tried to) how Lady Thatcher could, even while seated in the House of Lords, serve as Prime Minister. Doing so from that Chamber, she would not need to answer questions raised in the House of Commons. On the other hand, she would have to answer questions raised in the House of Lords ("where they would probably be more intelligent, as it happens"). Another guest asked whether there shouldn't be an award for British Conservatives who show special courage. She gave her husband as an example, because, in a room with thirty people, he had said a few weeks ago to Mrs. Thatcher, "After all, there are other points of view than your own on that question." Not since Oliver Twist shoved his empty plate before the Beadle and asked for "more" have such effrontery and courage been shown.

The question of another point of view had to do with Mrs. Thatcher's recommendations for action against Serbia. She is utterly unambiguous. What she wishes, and wishes done immediately—preferably beginning about five months ago—is the bombing of the military encampments engaged in ethnically cleansing Bosnia–Herzegovina.

Mrs. Thatcher doesn't arrive at this position as though she were busting to deploy an atticful of toy soldiers. She is a woman deeply haunted by the atrocities of the Nazis and the Communists. About the latter, she reasons there was simply nothing that could be done. About the former, she says there was an endemic ignorance, until it was too late. But she reminds us that immediately after the war against Hitler was won, the allies embarked on a period of de-Nazification, in which efforts were made, on the whole successful, to educate the country at large in the horrors they had permitted in their midst, and to corral those especially guilty and send them either to the gallows or to jail.

No such effort at de-Communization followed the liberation of Eastern Europe, and now we see happening in Yugoslavia the same kind of thing done under Hitler–Stalin. And if we let this happen without protests in the form of high-tech deterrence in steel and explosives, we are doing worse than nothing: we are re-institutionalizing genocide as a European pastime. The arguments against following Mrs. Thatcher's advice are plausible and—dare one say it?—even persuasive. But her moral point is inspiriting, and leaves the dissenter feeling just a little bit ashamed.

Mrs. Thatcher's interests are in matters of quite urgent concern to her countrymen and to Europe. She holds the implications of Maastricht in great horror, because she recognizes that the overweening state continues to do the greatest harm to private initiative and to individual freedom.

She challenges, moreover, all but a single institutional goal of the EC. She points out that as you get closer and closer to free trade, you need less and less government. Nothing is freer than the right of a New Yorker to order something from the L. L. Bean catalogue in Maine, and it would be desirable that someone in Birmingham could buy shoes directly from a producer in Milan. But Maastricht promises a huge bureaucracy that will engage primarily in redistribution. It would be far better to make progress in the Uruguay round of GATT than to concentrate on free trade within the EC. The only objection she has to the North American Free Trade Agreement, says she, is that the word "American" should read, "Atlantic."

The prospects for a common currency in Europe grow dimmer as the public contemplates the intangibles. On the one hand it would be wonderfully useful to have a common currency—trade imbalances would simply go away. Ah, but if central banks continued to exercise the authority they now do, then the whole idea of such common currency becomes illusory. If a central bank can create money, as our Federal Reserve can create money, what is to prevent a membernation from bailing itself out with a competing currency? Nobody has come up with an adequate substitute for a gold standard, and Britain has certainly not come up with an adequate substitute for Margaret Thatcher. □

(Universal Press Syndicate)

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Familee

MY RECENT remarks on "Huggee" drew so many supportive letters that I shall continue my assault on emotional warmth.

Of the six candidates for national office in the late campaign, five were named Bush, Quayle, Clinton, Gore, and Stockdale. It was a veritable festival of Anglo-Saxons, but you never would have known it. A true Wasp would just as soon break out of an egg or rise from the sea on a shell, but the Gang of Five never shut up about Familee.

"The English," wrote G. M. Trevelyan, "have always been singular for caring little about their cousins and ignoring their distant relatives."

The language of the Anglo-Saxon race has no words to denote the relationship between one in-law and his or her opposite number. In Yiddish the father-in-law is the *machuten* and the mother-in-law the *machetayneste*, and all relatives by marriage are called *machetunim*. In Waspish they're called "Oh, God, here they come!" By forcing us into tongue-twisters like "my daughter-in-law's brother's father-in-law," Waspish discourages us from even talking about them, much less inviting them to visit.

It's a Wasp thing, but Al Gore doesn't understand. Watching the face of little Albert Gore III while his calculatingly smarmy father described his son's injuries in explicit detail at the Democratic Convention, it was obvious the embarrassed child longed to heed the call of his genes and become one of those plucky lads who leave home at 12.

The little Wasp wanderer was immortalized in Thomas Hovenden's painting, *Breaking Home Ties*, and in the nineteenth-century ballad, "Where Is My Wandering Boy Tonight?" Seeking his fortune out West or going to sea as a cabin boy, he never saw his own family again, but he hit it off so well with someone else's that he became the sole heir of a rich stranger for whom he did some minor good turn—like Pip taking food and drink to the escaped convict in *Great Expectations*.

The will reading is full of infuriated blood relatives, as well it might be: "I, Edward Fairfield, having disowned my four sons and declared them legally dead, do hereby give and bequeath all my worldly goods to Thomas Trueheart, who very kindly returned my lost scarf thirty years ago. So that my sisters will not be able to interfere with my wishes in this matter, I leave them each the sum of one dollar."

Waspdom's straggly family ties fascinated the Eastern European immigrants who built the Hollywood movie industry. The remittance man whose family *pays* him to stay in Rangoon, having no parallel in Jewish life, exerted a morbid hold on the Jewish imagination. So did letters marked RETURN TO SENDER remailed from Tasmania, or funerals attended by no one except a dry-eyed housekeeper played by Agnes Moorehead, but what really enthralled the moguls was the Wasp-sister plot.

Two sisters loathe each other. One is plain, the other is pretty; one cleans the house, the other messes it up; one is a virgin, the other is a wanton; one wears glasses, the other can see in the dark. Something has happened to put what Wasps call "bad blood" between them—a redundancy, that: to our way of thinking, bad blood is the only kind of blood there is.

Someone is planning to drown someone. It's an easy death to arrange because the sisters always live on a bleak, blustery, inaccessible coast. They must go to the mainland to pick up their mail, and Mean Sister always rows. Nice Sister can't swim.

If drowning fails, Mean Sister chops at a tree until it falls on Nice Sister's side of the house. Failing that, Mean Sister tries to drive Nice Sister insane. She gets up in the middle of the night and moves the furniture, tampers with the grandfather clock that hasn't lost a second in fifty years, kills squirrels and nails them to the door, and so on. Driving someone insane is hard work, but after all, she's your sister.

Nice Sister obediently loses her mind, but instead of sending her to an asylum, Mean Sister decides to take care of her at home. Why the sudden solicitude? Because 15 years earlier, Mean Sister stole Nice Sister's fiancé. Now her Wasp conscience asserts itself, as Wasp consciences will, and tells her that she must Do the Right Thing for the crazy bitch.

IT SOUNDS like the end, but it isn't. Now comes the second climax, proving that relatives are *twice* as bad as we thought. It's true that Mean Sister married Nice Sister's fiancé, which accounts for Mean Sister's guilt. But now we learn that on the wedding night, Nice Sister sneaked into the lighthouse to murder Mean Sister, and murdered the bridegroom by mistake. This accounts for Nice Sister's greater guilt and explains why she has so graciously submitted to Mean Sister's cruelty all these years. After all, she had to make it up to the slut.

Wasps have disdained the ties that bind because the political institutions we invented relieved us of the need to huddle together. Thanks to the dead white males who gathered at Runnymede, Americans have never heard the knock on the door in the middle of the night. Familee has less to do with "traditional values" than with an unspoken fear that our liberties are imperiled. —FLORENCE KING

Miss King's latest book is With Charity Toward None *(St. Martin's Press).*

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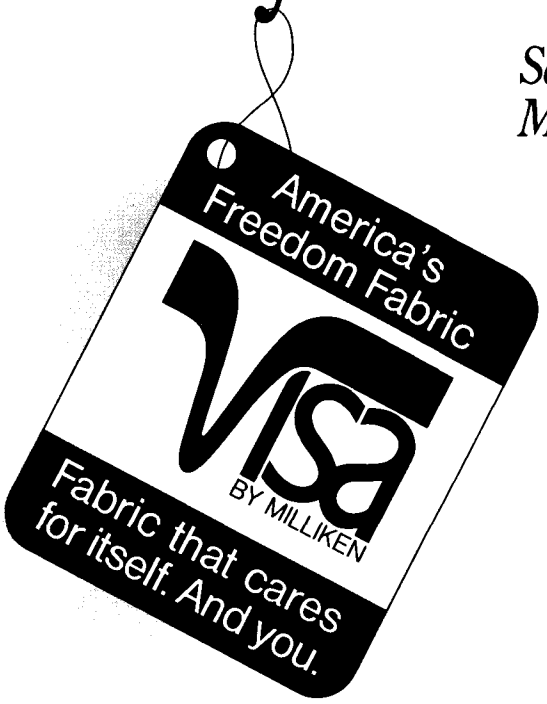

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John Hudick, Ford Quality Surveillance Inspector

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